Ooowee… Getting ready to go”

“Packing up. Getting ready to go. And glad about it!”

I remember singing this song at a gospel concert I did a few years ago but the words in the song is talking about packing up getting ready to go to heaven and making sure your SOUL SALVATION is in order.

But this “packing up and getting ready to go” is talking about how I’ve already started packing and will be boarding the NORWEGIAN cruise line inMiami,Floridaon Monday, November 19th, my 59th birthday. I’m flying out ofClevelandon Sunday, November 18th after the 11 a.m. Worship Service Celebration.

“Oooee!”

I won’t even have to preach this Sunday because my dear brother in the ministry Reverend Larry C. Tuggle, all the way fromChattanooga,Tennessee, will be preaching the message. Tuggle with his wife and his daughter already planned to be here inClevelandmonths ago for Thanksgiving with family so God already was in the plan for him to be preaching at my church on this Sunday. Amen! Wow! What a birthday gift. Instead of PREACHING the word, I’ll be able to sit next to my precious mother and be encouraged by LISTENING to the word. After the worship service is over, cake and ice cream will be served. But, as quiet as it’s kept, I’d rather skip that part and just head to the airport. I’d rather skip the birthday cards and even the gifts to

get a better gift to just GET AWAY.

I have not had a vacation in over twenty years! That's what I said and it's a FACT. This is not my first cruise, the second. The first was not a vacation but a three day workshop for bishops dealing with urban ministry. That Fri., Sat., and Sun. on that first cruise was work as I just glanced at the waters in between rushing to the different class sessions on the Majesty of the Seas cruise line.

THIS FOUR DAY CRUISE, I'M GOING TO ENJOY!!!!

Ooowee! I already see the water and the ship in my mind AND THE TWO DIFFERENT ISLANDS I'LL BE VISITING. I already have my Thanksgiving suite ready for the banquet and I won't have on a minister's collar.

How did this long, overdue, much needed birthday cruise gift start? Two members in the church asked me, "Bishop, what you want to do and what would you like for your birthday."

Laughing I quickly responded, "I don't need no Bible as a birthday gift. I already have boxes and boxes of Bibles, many that I will start giving away for those who would love to have one.

They continued laughing. "Bishop, you've been preaching every Sunday for well over three years, doing everything for everybody, work on your off days, give your own money you make doing funerals, workshops, weddings because you receive no salary here at the church and often add in your money to assist in paying the church expenses. Bishop, you've seen so many of us including my husband and I go on vacations. What can the church do for you?"

The more this individual talked, the more I already knew and really felt that it would be nice to just get away. Making time to find rest when the work is and will never be done is so important. God's work will always continue until he returns AGAIN!

SO I NEED TO LEARN HOW TO REST!

Read Exodus 20:8-11. This passage, the longest of the Ten Commandments, tells us to honor the Sabbath by keeping it holy. Keeping it holy is easy. No one in the household is to do any kind of work. These verses also help answer the question of why God rested on the seventh day. Did he need to rest? No. I doubt that our omnipotent God was tired. Was his work all done? Although God had finished the initial act of creating, His work - as evidenced throughout the Bible - was far from over. Instead, He rested to set an example for us to follow. We are to work six days but rest the seventh, says verse 11. What's my point? This Bishop, this Servant of God, needs to REST. I thank God for the many personal friends of my MOTHER, the faithful few members AND I MEAN FEW MEMBERS OF INTOUCH and those outside of the church family that gave toward the total cost of the trip to be paid for.

The Sunday overnight hotel, the round trip flight, the cruise all paid in full. They truly understand what the Bible means when it states, in 1 Timothy 5:17, "Let the elders that rule over you be counted worthy of double honor, especially they that labor in the Word and Doctrine."

What an honor for those who love me to give me this honor of getting away to come back ready to continue to service of the Lord. They honored my answer and did what I requested and not what they wanted to do. You ever have individuals ask you what you wanted and did what they wanted instead? Yes, I know one ought to be grateful but why ask in the first place?

I want each of you, my readers, too also realize that the ones you just know are going to sacrifice for you will be most likely not to. The ones who do sacrifice will be the ones you least expect. Amen! Remember that's life but when God is in Control what's meant to be will happen! Amen!

I thank the individual who visited the church and heard the announcements in regards to the birthday gift for the bishop and put $1 in the envelope. The cost at the hotel had a 99 cent charge so her blessing was truly a blessing in reality. It was not how much they gave that counted, but that they gave.

Read Mark 12:1. Many rich men dropped in a lot of money then a poor widow came along and dropped in two little coins, worth about a penny. "I tell you this poor widow put more in the box

than all the others," Jesus stated. Hard times for individuals will always be but one does what one wants to do if they want to do it in the first place.

It's called sacrifice. It's called LOVE!

I thank the individual from New York who sent her $100 check, saying, "Bishop, I remember, when here at my church, the pastor said he wanted the church to send him and his wife on a cruise for his pastoral anniversary and I looked over and told my husband, "Hell, we can't go on a cruise ourselves." After giving our pledge anyway for the pastor and his wife to go, my husband and I won a year later in a raffle a two weeks cruise, a week longer than what my pastor and his wife went on. From that moment on, I never talked against the prophet of God as even taught in the Bible not to do so. 1 Chronicles 16:22. Enjoy your cruise, Bishop".

To the handful of individuals who made this birthday cruise possible, I say THANK YOU. I'll come back better and even more ready to serve the Lord because I've learned nothing is wrong with RESTING.

"Bon voyage!"

You can e-mail the bishop at bishopspeaks@aol.com. Write him at the church969 E. 140th St.Cleveland,Ohio,44110 in the heart of the Collinwood Community directly across the street from the Job Corps Campus offSt. Clair Ave.