

Romans 5.1-8

Hope

I was writing in my prayer journal and the words that flowed were, "I had hoped..." "I had hoped that this week I would be more organized and disciplined. I had hoped to make more phone calls and visits. I had hoped to have my sermon written well in advance. I had hoped..."

You may have your own list of things you had hoped for. Some may have included, I had hoped for a few more years. I had hoped that retirement would include golfing, travel, gardening, more time for painting. I had hoped that our family could mend our brokenness, I had hoped that I could come out of the depression, I had hoped that the cancer could be dealt with. I had hoped to attend my grandchild's graduation or wedding.

More broadly one might hope for peace in Ukraine, safe passage and homes for refugees, housing for the underhoused, churches that could agree on how to understand and interpret scripture. One may have hoped that colonization was a thing of the past and that broken relationships with our indigenous siblings could be reconciled.

Hope

Hope as a noun is defined as desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment; expectation of fulfillment or success. Hope can also be someone or something on which hopes are centered. It may also be something desired or hoped for.¹

As a verb, hope defined is to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true or to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment. It can mean to expect with confidence – to trust.²

Whether one is Christian or not, hope is important. Hope gives us a reason to get up in the morning. Hope that the new day will bring good things. For those who live in the darkness of depression or despair, hope can be elusive. Hope is life giving and important to well-being.

Though it is Father's Day, I share a story of my mother, one which I have shared before. It was she who said that as long as she could see a light in the darkness of her trials, she had hope. I knew that things were going sideways in her last year when she shared

¹ [Hope Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#). Accessed June 16, 2023.

² Ibid.

that she couldn't see that light anymore. Chronic pain, struggling with mobility issues, an unending unforgiving itch that could not be relieved, took away her hope for joy in this life. Though in this life she had lost hope, she still knew that in her death her hope was in being freed from all that hindered her now and that she would live in the joy and love of God.

Some people are able to live with much challenge and never lose their hope. Hope gives them the ability to live life with joy. It does not take away the struggle, but somehow it well, as Paul says, produces character.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul begins with talking about the joy, the faithfulness, the unity, and realization of God promise of faith and grace. This particular reading follows on the heels of all that with the words, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God." (v1-2) Wonderful!

It sounds wonderful. Faith, peace, grace, hope, sharing the glory of God. It wraps up everything in a beautiful picture of what we wish our lives and the world offered. But that is not our world, and Paul quickly acknowledges that with words that express that in this life there is suffering and there is no getting around it. Yet he is able to write about suffering in a way that gives it meaning and purpose. Before I read it again, understand that it is not God's will that we suffer. Choices in our control and beyond our control take a toll.

Still Paul writes, "And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (v3-5).

Let me read that slowly. Ponder each layer. And not only that...but we also boast in our sufferings...knowing that suffering produces endurance...and endurance produces character...and character produces hope...and hope does not disappoint us...because God's love has been poured into our hearts...through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

That love was demonstrated on the cross, where God's own Son, Jesus Christ, took all that we bear in this world, all that separates us from God and made a way for relationships to be restored, people to be restored. Sometimes this restoration is physical healing, but that healing is more about hearts than it is about anything else. It is about love.

On this National Indigenous People's Sunday, we think of the broken relationship between settlers and Indigenous people. We cannot take away the harm done, but we can work toward reconciling the harm done. And when I say we, it will take love, forgiveness, peace, and hope for a better way by all. God did not want the pain and

suffering that was the result of colonization. The sharing of the Gospel was to bring peace not pain. Us Christians have not done that well, taking the Great Commission to mean share the gospel regardless of what needs to be sacrificed. May God and others forgive our arrogance.

It is also Pride month, and again we hear of harm done in the name of those who believe their take on God's word is the only way to read and interpret scripture. May God and those who have endured harm forgive our arrogance.

For those who have experienced harm through colonization, prejudice, and judgement, those who have experience harm at the hands and words of those who were supposed to love them, these words of suffering are not to be used to justify their suffering, but hopefully bring meaning and purpose through healing.

We all suffer, some have suffered because of culture and society, many of us have individual trials and tribulations that are part of being human in a human body.

What I have learned is that when we do the work of emotional and spiritual healing and allow God into the healing, we can boast, or translated another way, we can rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us... Hope does not disappoint us... because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Each of us regardless of race, culture, gender identity, social or economic status is loved, and God proved his love for us in that while we still were sinners, broken hurting people, Christ died for us.

May each day glimmer with hope from the time you get up to the time you lay down to end the day. The hope is not for perfection or lack of struggle, but that in our living, in our expectation that God is showing up for us, that if we allow God to use us, we may in time be a light, a glimmer of hope, a healing presence because we understand the suffering, and know the promises of faith, peace, grace, hope and above all love.

In Christ, with Christ, through the Holy Spirit that has been give to us. Amen.