

“Anchored in Hope”

MJCF

November 29, 2020

Psalm 33:16-22

Since we had the "show and tell" sharing time, you know today's theme is hope. The passage read from the book of Psalms talks about where we put our hope. We read, "A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a vain hope for victory and by its great might it cannot save." This is in direct contrast to Jesus Christ, who is the source of true hope and victory. In the same Psalm we read, "...the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love." The Lord watches over us and cares for us. The Lord is the source of true security and hope. The steadfast love of the Lord is emphasised again at these few short verses, "Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you." As we prepare to celebrate the Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, coming to us in the form of a baby at Christmastime, we place our hope in a powerful God who loves us deeply. In this life, the hope of Christ can carry us through whatever we fear. I'd like to finish by reading an article written by my mother, published in Purpose magazine, back in December 2014:

A winter car trip to southern British Columbia is usually a welcome reprieve from the snow and ice of Calgary. Before setting out on our return home on a recent such journey, we were anxious to determine weather conditions in the two mountain passes we would be traversing. Every forecast we heard was focused on the Fraser Valley. The rest of the province was lumped into "The Interior."

"What do they mean by 'interior'? It's a huge province," I demanded of a local resident who ought to know. "I'm not sure," she replied thoughtfully. "That must be the area beyond Hope." I gasped. What a grim description of exactly where we needed to go! Of course, I quickly realized she was talking about the small frontier town of Hope, where roads branch out in several directions, including ours.

Hope is a beautiful thing. It supplies us with intention, energy, perseverance, and joy. Martin Luther King once said, "Everything that is done in this world is done by hope." For him, hope of a better future for black and white people living together sparked dreams, speeches, marches, and other daring challenges to the status quo.

At the same time, Nelson Mandela was serving a life sentence for using violence in seeking similar freedoms for blacks in South Africa. On arrival at the Robben Island prison, he had been greeted by a grimfaced warden:

"You will never leave this island. You may receive one 30-minute visit a year and write and receive one letter every six months."

So much for hope. Yet Mandela refused to stop dreaming. Hope kept him working on new possibilities, even in his bare, 8' by 7' cell. In the 18 years he spent on this bleak island, he moved from advocating violence to achieve the desired ends for his people, to realizing that violence only begets more violence.

Martin Luther King was assassinated when he was only 39 years old, but the fruit of his ministry lives on. Even he could scarcely have imagined a black US president in what could potentially have been his own lifetime. Nor, surely, could his contemporary, Mandela have expected to become the great national leader and healer he became.

When all hope on this earth is gone, biblical hope continues - even beyond the grave. For people of faith, there is no such thing as "beyond hope".

Let's pray.

O Lord, there is so much in this world that feels like it's beyond hope. Climate change due to pollution has resulted in flooding and other disasters. Political upheaval has caused tensions in the US as well as here in Canada. And, the spreading Corona virus has affected us through loss of work, loss of income, fear for the future, and fear for our health and the health of others around us. We confess that we sometimes feel powerless to make any positive difference. Thank-you that in Jesus, we have hope beyond all measure. Even when we don't see a spark of hope in the darkness, we can trust that you are at work. As we look forward to celebrating the birth of Christ next month, open our eyes that we may see the places where you are bringing the light of your love, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

