

Untitled

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church

August 26, 2018, Nathan Hirsh

It can be difficult to understand how it is that Hope truly impacts our Christian life. Part of getting there is knowing the difference between Faith and Hope.

Faith is comprised in many ways of broader larger statements about our belief. It's sort of like how the earth revolves around the sun. Most people believe that statement to be true, though we are never 100% sure that when we wake up tomorrow we will keep on spinning through space as we have been all along. There are all sorts of scientific statements that we can pull just from the fact that we revolve around the sun, but before we get to them, we have to start with the simple truth that we do.

Our hopes are our expectations of our faith, the ways our faith and our actions interact with each other in our everyday lives. When I get into my car and I drive every day I am coasting along on my hopes for the system of laws we put in place to govern driving. Every time I cross an intersection I am doing so in my faith that the drivers to either side of me are all licensed and aware of the different traffic laws that keep us safe. Each time I do that I am engaging in my hope that I will make it safely to the other side, a hope that is reinforced by my faith in those driving laws.

In Acts 2:25-28 David talks about the idea of resting in hope. We put this principle into place actively all day every single day. I feel no stress or anxiety when I drive through the intersection because my hope has given me confidence that what I believe will come to pass will come to pass.

However, sometimes that peace is shattered. Sometimes our hopes come into conflict with the hope of others. When someone has a car accident, it is because at least one if not both people had a misunderstanding of the facts. They didn't pay attention in drivers ed, they missed that stop sign on the corner, they were not in an appropriate state to drive. In other words, there was something that conflicted in their faith with the person driving along with them. As a result, they had a different hope for how the scene would play out than it did.

As people, when your hope conflicts with someone else's, it can be easy to abandon those hopes altogether. We can make excuses one way or another to convince ourselves that the whole of our hope was never worth it and that our faith too is not worth it either. While there is something to be said about taking the time to consider your motivations and decisions when something bad happens, this can sometimes get taken too far. When things get frustrating, it is all too common that faiths and hopes are abandoned wholesale leaving people with nothing to replace them.

On the other end, sometimes people are too prideful to admit their own fault in a situation, unwilling to consider that they may be misinterpreting things or that the statements of faith that form the foundations of their hopes are not as rock solid as they believe. They drive these wrecked worldviews away from the scene of the crash and refuse to make the effort to repair the situation. They open themselves up to catastrophe in the future once again.

For Christians, steps of humility are crucial in these times. It is important that we remove ourselves from these situations and assess what it is we can learn, how it is that we can grow closer to God as we think on our hopes for our walk with Christ. However, part of doing this well is by not waiting until a time of crisis. When we actively engage in our hopes, follow through with the same confidence that we drive through an intersection with, we provide ourselves with opportunity to develop and grow them in safe spaces. On Sunday mornings during sermons when we disagree with the pastor, at Simpson house when we

meet someone much less fortunate than ourselves, in prayer with our family after a hard day at work, when we turn on the news and see another world shattering story. It is more than just bringing our faith into these spaces, more than knowing what we hope will come to pass. It is choosing to actively work to bring those hopes to fruition. It is getting in the car and driving it full speed towards our destination.

For our church, we believe that destination is the fulfilled work of justice. We believe it is grace for everyone and opportunity shared with all oppressed peoples near and far. We believe it is the radical world changing love of Christ, but we cannot see those hopes come to fruition without the faithful work of each and every member of our congregation.

So I pray for each and every member of this congregation that when it comes to our beliefs, we may all know what it means to rest in hope, to feel our path guided and directed by Spirit of God as David said in Acts 2:25-28:

“I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’^[a]