

Hello Voyagers,

Your Sunday School teachers miss you.

We have decided to prepare a few devotionals for you periodically for the rest of 2020. Hopefully, we can discuss how and when we might reunite as a class soon – maybe January. We are aware that for all Churches, this continues to be a time of experimentation regarding Covid. You may have already, or soon will, receive a questionnaire regarding your thoughts about how and when we might reunite.

Speaking of “hope”, how are you doing: are you “hopeful”? How are you weathering the Covid, the social distancing, the election, the economy, your health, and/or the isolation?

A recent and well written article by Elizabeth Bernstein (Wall Street Journal) says, “Hope is crucial to our physical and mental health. It guards against anxiety and despair. It protects us from stress, and that research shows that people with better levels of hope have better coping skills and bounce back from setbacks faster. They are better at problem -solving and have low levels of burnout.” She goes on: “They have stronger relationships because they communicate better and are more trusting. They are less-stressed parents and more able to teach their children to set goals and solve problems”. No wonder Paul calls the big three: faith, hope and love. (1 Cor 13:13)

But what is *hope*? Is it a belief that the future will work out well no matter what we do? No, I think not. That might be called “optimism”.

Psychologists define hope as a yearning for something possible but not certain, but something that we do have some power to make it happen. Rick Miller, clinical director for the Center of Advanced Study and Practice of Hope, Arizona State University, says: “Hope is a choice.” Anthony Scioli, psychology professor at Keene State College, says: Hope

is malleable. Some people are more hopeful than others, thanks to a combination of “nature” and “nurture”. For me, “nature” means God and His Creation; and “nurture” means the Holy Spirit and the truth of God’s Word.

Dr. Scioli says people draw on four main resources for their “hope reservoir”:

“1) Attachment to or trust in another person – I would ask? how about Jesus?

2) Mastery or Empowerment – i.e. having people who validate your strengths. I would ask: How about Jesus telling us “you are fearfully and wonderfully made”.

3) Survival – you are not trapped, and you can see the good possible while dealing with the bad. I would say: How about the grace of God which promises each of us a room in the everlasting kingdom of God?

4) Spirituality. A belief in something bigger than yourself. I would say: Amen, Amen.

It is sad that in our post-modern world writers, researchers, editors, and publishers believe it is unwise to identify things for what they truly are in matters of faith and religion. But you and I are free to know and profess that spirituality means: faith in the one true God, that empowerment means: the Good News of the Gospel, that survival means: Heaven both on earth and hereafter; and that attachment means: trusting Jesus of Nazareth, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Ms. Bernstein concludes her article on Hope by saying “words and emotions are important. We are to spread hope. Emotions are contagious. Model it for others.” I AGREE. Sounds to me like the Great Commission: Therefore, go and make disciples of all people.... and

teach them everything I have taught you. I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Romans 15:13: May the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in **Hope**.

Hebrews 6:19: We have as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a **hope** that enters the inner place behind the curtain

Hebrews 10:23: Let us hold fast the confession of our **hope** without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Jeremiah 31:17: There is **hope** for your future, and your children shall come back to their own country.

Friends, I hope you have enjoyed this devotional.

Your teachers will endeavor to follow with more devotionals in the weeks ahead.

We welcome any comments or devotionals you may wish to send to the class.

And,

I **hope** we may all see each other soon, in personal fellowship, in Bible study, and in our corporate worship to our One, Almighty, Creator God who sent His Son to die for us on the cross. Blessings.