

Faith, Hope & Love

Presented by Tressie Gade on 9-2-18
At Crossroads United Methodist Church
Waunakee, WI

Scripture:

Hebrews 11:1

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see
Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you” says the Lord. “They are plans for good not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Romans 5:5

“And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love”

Corinthians 13:13

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love”



Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Or said another way “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy”. Hamlet said that to his friend Horatio in act one, scene five of Hamlet by William Shakespeare. Faith is a bit of an abstract concept to some. It’s not something tangible, you can’t see it, or touch it, or hear it. It is something that is felt, and it is deeply personal. Seeing me standing here, giving a sermon for the third time, you might assume I have a strong faith. I do have a strong faith, TODAY. But it wasn’t always that way.

My grandfather was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease and Lewy Body Disease when I was in high school, and this shook me to my core. He was a United Methodist preacher and I idolized him. He did so many good things and seemed so strong in his faith and I didn’t understand how God could let this happen, why God would make him suffer like this. Watching my grandfather decline was hard, and I did the only thing I thought rational. I got mad. I got mad at God and boy did I let him know. My prayers turned into angry rants and I decided to walk away from the church. I turned my back on God and tried to silence his voice. I was suffering a crisis of faith. Even if I didn’t know it at the time.

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Turning my back on God and my church family was one of my poorer decisions. See at that time in my life I was leaving high school and starting college. Most of my close friends went out of state and I ended up feeling very alone. I felt like God had abandoned me. Really it was the other way around.



For much of my early 20s I woke up feeling nothing by hopeless and unimportant. It was one of the hardest times of my life. See not only do I live with anxiety, but I also live with depression. If you are lucky enough to not be touched by this sickness, depression is like living with a constant dark cloud over your head. I got really good at acting ok, even if I felt like I was dying inside. I felt unimportant and there were days I didn't want to live anymore. I am relieved to say that I'm doing better today, but I still sometimes get sad and I don't know why, even with all the joys in my life. This is something I struggle with daily and something I know will follow me all my life. But I have some great tools to help me. I was blessed with parents who took me to see a therapist, and doctors who knew the right medication to prescribe.

The other tool I use to remind myself to have hope, I bet all of you have access to as well. You may have it in its bound version or as an app on your phone. The B-I-B-L-E. This is one of mine and it is full of stories and verses staring hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us "For I know the plans I have for you" says the Lord. "They are plans for good not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope". God had a plan for my life and when I let him back in my life, I once again found my hope.

Romans 15:13 says "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." Our faith in God will give us hope. Hebrews 6:19 says "This hope, which is a safe and secure anchor for our whole being, enters the sanctuary behind the curtain". God is reminding to secure our hope in him and his works. And what great works they are. I am constantly reminded of Gods grace and beauty when I see a flower bloom or hear my daughter laugh. Romans 5:5 says "And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love".

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Can you guess where this is going now? I have saved the best for last. Love is another one of those things that can only be felt. First Corinthians 13:13 says “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love”. Love is a powerful thing. The love I felt from God, my family and my church family saved my life.

First Corinthians, chapter 13 has a lot to say on love. I’m sure you all know at least some of it, Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong doing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. It’s read at a lot of weddings. It was read at mine three years ago. I don’t think God was just referring to romantic love here, I think he was talking about all kinds. Like love for a parent or a friend. Or the love we feel from God. The love he wants us to take out into the world. Love is powerful. When I was depressed I was convinced that I was completely unlovable. Now I can look back and see that was completely false. But the thing is, when your depressed, you don’t love yourself and when you don’t love yourself you don’t understand how someone else could possible love you.

There is a country song by Reba McEntire that came out in 1999 called “I’ll Be”. It’s a song of encouragement. The chorus goes “I’ll be your shoulder when you need someone to lean on. Be your shelter, when you need someone to see you through. I’ll be there to carry you. I’ll be there. I’ll be the rock that will be strong for you. The one that will hold on to you. When you feel that rain falling down. When there’s nobody else around. I’ll be.” This song has always made me stop and think.

See when you have depression, sometimes you need to be reminded that you are not alone, and that people are there for you and love you, even if you don’t love yourself. My parents were always there for me, and never gave up me. They constantly reminded me that I was loved and I was important.

When I let God back into my life again and I found my hope and my faith, I also felt his love again. When, I came back to church, I did so a little at a time. First helping out in youth group, then leading youth group and eventually coming back to services. And the wonderful thing was, God and my church family welcomed me back, with open, loving arms. Coming back to church was like coming home after a long trip. I felt safe, and loved, and like I belonged. This journey led me to where I am now, standing in front of you all, telling my story, and hoping that it might reach someone who needs to hear the message.

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Faith, hope and love. Remember that. Remember to secure your faith in God and his church. Remember to have hope, God has plans for you. Remember to have love in your heart always. Remember love is a powerful thing that can actually save a life. "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." Amen.