

Sunday December 1, 2013

The focus of this first Sunday of Advent is hope. This word has many meanings but one of the best ones is "to long for something". We begin this season leading to Christmas looking forward. Each day we move closer to something wonderful. Hope is not simply seeing the world as it is but passionately working for the world as it should be!

Isaiah 2: 1-5

Isaiah was a prophet in the southern kingdom of the Jews in the 8th century BC. He speaks in a time of political unrest and injustice. This message presents a transformed world without war and national rivalries. All the people of the world will be united under God living with peace and righteousness. Hope dares to imagine a changed world.

¹The Message Isaiah got regarding Judah and Jerusalem:

²There's a day coming when the mountain of God's House Will be The Mountain—solid, towering over all mountains. All nations will river toward it, people from all over set out for it. ³They'll say, "Come, let's climb God's Mountain, go to the House of the God of Jacob. He'll show us the way he works so we can live the way we're made." Zion's the source of the revelation. God's Message comes from Jerusalem. ⁴He'll settle things fairly between nations. He'll make things right between many peoples. They'll turn their swords into shovels, their spears into hoes. No more will nation fight nation; they won't play war anymore. ⁵Come, family of Jacob, let's live in the light of God.

Matthew 24: 36-44

If the hope expressed by Isaiah seems like a pipe dream, you'll find the words of Jesus in this next passage even more implausible. Near the end of his ministry Jesus was asked about the time to come. Rather than giving his listeners a date, he told them that only God would know and our task is to wait and be ready. Hope means being open to the good surprises of life.

³⁶But the exact day and hour? No one knows that, not even heaven's angels, not even the Son. Only the Father knows.

³⁷The Arrival of the Son of Man will take place in times like Noah's. ³⁸Before the great flood everyone was carrying on as usual, having a good time right up to the day Noah boarded the ark. ³⁹They knew nothing—until the flood hit and swept everything away.

"The Son of Man's Arrival will be like that: ⁴⁰Two men will be working in the field—one will be taken, one left behind; ⁴¹two women will be grinding at the mill—one will be taken, one left behind. ⁴²So stay awake, alert. You have no idea what day your Master will show up. ⁴³But you do know this: You know that if the homeowner had known what time of night the burglar would arrive, he would have been there with his dogs to prevent the break-in. ⁴⁴Be vigilant just like that. You have no idea when the Son of Man is going to show up.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.
THANKS BE TO GOD!

Sermon – “Convinced that the world can be different”

Isaiah had a vision – a world as we are made to live.
A world without war
A world whose values reflect God

What a Pollyanna!!!??
Cheerful when all the world is collapsing around her
Unmerited optimism
Deluded/delusional
Naïve

What was God thinking? Why would a smart guy like Isaiah buy into this fairy tale?

Why would Nelson Mandela survive 28 years of back-breaking imprisonment at Robben Island and still hold onto the hope of freedom??

Let me tell you a little story from Africa...

There was once two shoe salesman who went to Africa to open new sales territories. Three days after they arrived, the first salesman faxed a message: “I will be returning on the next plane. I can’t sell shoes here. Everyone goes barefoot all the time.” There was no report from the second salesman for about two weeks. Then came a fat airmail envelope with this message for the home office. “Fifty orders enclosed. Prospects unlimited. Nobody here has shoes.”

Conversation Jesus has in MH’s gospel is a good example of hope at work.

Is not a question of “if” God will transform the world but “when”

The call to be attentive and ready is a statement of “hope”

The arrival of the Son of Man is a declaration of the dawn of a new age

New values

New operating systems

Era of justice, mercy

Origin:

From the name of the child heroine created by Eleanor Porter (1868-1920), American writer

The novel’s success brought the term “Pollyanna” (along with the adjective “pollyannaish” and the noun “Pollyannaism”) into the language to describe someone who is cheerfully optimistic and who always maintains a generous attitude toward the

motives of other people. It also became, by extension – contrary to the spirit of the book – a derogatory term for a naïve optimist who always expects people to act decently, despite strong evidence to the contrary.

Yet here we are – on the cusp of another Christmas season

Ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus because what we know of his earthly life is unforgettable.

Jesus set the world on a different path – not perfect but different. As we wrestle with the imperfection we move our culture slowly, relentlessly to the world as it was made for us.

It was a promise from 8th Century BC that was embodied in the 1st Century AD in Jesus.

It is a promise embraced by Nelson Mandela with such grace and dignity.

by Desmond Tutu

by Craig Keilburger

by Tommy Douglas ...

Barack Obama made it the unifying cry for his 1st campaign “Yes we can!”

Hope is who we are because it will get us to where we want to go.

Hope is a projection of the imagination; so is despair. Despair all too readily embraces the ills it foresees; hope is an energy and arouses the mind to explore every possibility to combat them... in response to hope the imagination is aroused to picture every possible issue, to try every door, to fit together even the most heterogeneous pieces in the puzzle. After the solution has been found it is difficult to recall the steps taken – so many of them are just below the level of consciousness. Thornton Wilder