

Youth Sunday

13 April 2014

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Frederick, Maryland

frederickuu.org

“HOPE” —William Singley

So this year, the YRUU¹ was not given a topic or a book to base the sermon off of, so we decided to come up with our own topic. One of us said hope and everyone else agreed that hope as a topic might be interesting, but wanted a variety of topics to choose from. After several awesome ideas and several brainstorming sessions, people kept coming back to the idea of hope. So hope, became the central focus that everyone agreed on. So here is more about hope.

“Pandora's Jar (or box)” —Sam Melcher

According to an ancient Greek legend, the first woman on earth was named Pandora. There were plenty of men living in a utopia without sadness, disease, death, or women. So when the gods created Pandora, each gave her one of their own characteristics. Aphrodite gave her beauty, Athena gave her skill at weaving, Hermes gave her curiosity, and the other gods gave her other things. Most importantly Zeus gave her a beautiful jar (not a box) that she was told never to open. Pandora lived happily with her husband Epimetheus for many years. Yet every day she wondered what was in the jar. She often asked Epimetheus to open the jar but he always refused. One day when she was alone Pandora couldn't stand it any longer; the curiosity Hermes gave her finally won. She opened the jar and all the evils, sicknesses, and woes of the world came rushing out. Pandora quickly resealed the jar but she was too late to stop all but one of the inhabitants of the jar. The only thing left in the jar was Hope. But hope was no longer trapped. Hope was captured. Hope was held onto and not released to get away. Now to this day We all carry these jars with ourselves to this very day. We all carry Hope with us. Hope is the thing that lets us hold on in this world. If someone opens their jar and lets go of their Hope, then they lose everything. Because without Hope, all is lost.

¹ “Young Religious Unitarian Universalists.”

Glenn Turner

How does one define the word hope?

I was asked the very same question one day in fourth period. As I looked around the room I saw that some people wrote one word, some wrote two, some wrote the dictionary definition, and a few others wrote a paragraph. Then I looked back at my own paper and realized that I was the only person who wrote a poem as my definition.

I reread my poem, and I took the question to heart. How can we define the word hope? After all, it isn't something you can touch, it isn't something you can hear or smell. You can't even really see it. The dictionary defines hope as: "a feeling of expectation or desire for a certain thing to happen. It is a feeling, nothing more. Yet feelings are perhaps one of the strongest motivators in the world, especially powerful feelings; Feelings like love, anger, sadness, and hope. Hope can keep people moving forward down the path of life, past places where others have stopped, or worse, given up. Hope gives people the knowledge to know that there is truly a light at the end of the tunnel, even if they cannot see it right then.

I felt as though hope could have no definition but the word itself. To me it was like little orphan Annie said: "The sun will come out tomorrow." Think about that for a moment. It's true, right? The sun will indeed come out tomorrow. But, you ask, what if it rains today? Well then I would ask you a question in return: does the rain last forever? And you would answer no. That is what hope is. It is a fluid, somewhat imaginary thing that keeps people positive. It is a feeling and feelings cannot truly be defined. They are different to each person, and are expressed in different ways, with no two ways alike.

Hope is real. Hold it close, keep it safe, let it be your light in the dark, and try your hardest to never, ever let it go. That's my advice to you.

"Quest to Hope" —Stephanie Letourneau

I hope. You hope. He/she/it hopes. We hope. They hope. What is hope? According to Google, hope is a noun meaning "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen," or "a feeling of trust." Google provided hope in a humorous sentence as an example; "He looked through her belongings in the hope of coming across some information." Hope is

also a verb, meaning “want something to happen or be the case,” or “intend if possible to do something.” Another lovely sentence via Google: “He’s hoping for an offer of compensation.” Synonyms for hope: Aspiration, desire, wish, expectation, ambition, anticipate.

The Office Edition Websters II New Riverside Dictionary, revised edition, states that hope means “to want or wish for with a feeling of confident expectation.” Or “something wished.” Other ways to use hope are: to be hopeful, to have hopefulness, to be hopeless, or to be hoping.

On the Google search for hope, there are about 518 million results. One of those was a Christian college called “Hope College.” Also, an international charity, “Hope Worldwide.” And “Project HOPE,” which stands for Health Opportunities for People Everywhere. A picture presented that hope stood for “Have Only Positive Expectations.” As I scrolled down the webpage, I saw an Ad that said, “What is Hope?” I thought, “Wow! Perfect! Exactly what I need.” It’s an article on purposecity.com. First words are “Hope is a universal concept.” I skimmed the article and found a good quote from the author of the Hunger Games, Suzanne Collins, “Hope. It is the only thing stronger than fear. A little hope is effective. A lot of hope is dangerous.” So then I was curious. Was this quote in one of her books and I happened to miss it? Also, the rest of this article was on the Biblical viewpoint of hope, and I wasn’t prepared to dive into that pool of God and hope, and hell and heaven.

So I Googled her quote. The third result on Google was titled, “Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Binghamton.” The page was an article by Rev. Douglas Taylor titled, “Hope, Hunger, and the Truth about Fiction.” But I decided that I was getting off track and needed to focus on the topic I had been presented with. Hope. I’m a hopeful person; I try to look at the positive outcome on things. I guess that means I have high hopes such as: I hope to go to a good college, I hope to get good grades, I hope that I can make a difference, I hope that we can start taking responsibility for the pollution that we produce.

Children have hope too. They hope that they can grow up and be a firefighter or a princess or like their mommy and daddy. Adults have hope. They hope they can provide for their family, or have a family, or find someone to love. Even grandparents have hope; they hope their grandchildren will carry on their legacy and that they grow up right in this crazy world. I know a

few people named Hope. One Hope got her name because her mother thought that we needed more of it in the world. Is a hope a want? Or do hopes make us want more? Are we greedy because we think our hopes are greater than another's? In Tulsa, OK, there's the "Hope Unitarian Church." I wonder if they can tell me what hope is.

The famous Hope Diamond, also known as "the Kings jewel," or "the blue of France," is at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum in Washington, D.C. I saw the beauty when I was little when visited the museum one summer. I got replica earrings in the gift shop. It became known as the "Hope Diamond," when Henry Phillip Hope and Hope family had ownership of it. It's ironic that it's named Hope, because the diamond is said to have a curse that bring misfortune and tragedy to those who own it or wear it.

For some, hope can be a gift. It doesn't fix anything but it can bring a comfort that some may need. Or maybe enough hope can fix something. Hope is often a word used to describe what's given to people in developing countries with hunger problems, unsafe water, or illness. Austin Gutwein, a young man who has been making a difference for over 10 years now, has an organization called, "Hoops for Hope." I met him a few years ago at the Christian music festival, "Creation." His focus is Zambia, Africa, where his pen pal lives, helping children with AIDS and malaria. People can organize a basketball shoot-a-thon event to raise money, and to give these children hope. Austin is an example of someone with not only hope, but the with the willingness to do something with his hope for the better. I have his book "Live to Give," if anyone would like to read it!

A group of military wives in 2006 founded the organization, "Hope For The Warriors," that supports U.S. service members, their families, and families of the fallen. The "About Us" page states at the bottom, "Together we can continue restoring: Self, family, hope. It is still lead by the dedicated military wives who have seen first hand the physical and psychological wounds in the line of duty. Some families feel they can never be the same, and become hopeless. This organization offers programs and assistance that give hope back to these service members and families. It's a gift that many can't even dream of.

So you see, hope is fragile. It's so sacred and helpful to so many. It can be so easily given to those who need it. I bet you could think of one person right now who needs a little hope! How can you give the simple gift of hope?

I want to finish with a few quotes:

“Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.”

“When the world says give up, hope whispers, try one more time.”

“Let your hope make you glad. Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying” (Romans 12:12).

“But as for me, I will always have hope” (Psalm 71:14)

“Wrapping up Hope” —Glenn Turner

Earlier you all heard me say that I wrote a poem as my definition of hope. I suppose that you all are wondering how the poem went aren't you? Well good news, I decided to read it for you. So my definition of hope goes like this:

Hope is a wish, a prayer.

Hope is faith in something you can't see.

Hope is what you have for life,

For the world.

Hope fills an empty or battered soul.

Hope can heal.

Hope pushes us forward,

Towards new beginnings.

Hope cannot be defined,

Yet the word itself is the definition.

Hope is, yet it isn't.

Hope is hope.

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