

Good Sunday morning from a chilly hill in Rockport!

Sunday, February 3, 2019

This morning in our worship service at the Federated Church in Thomaston, the scriptural text we will be considering is 1 Corinthians 13, known as "the love chapter" of 1 Corinthians. It ends with "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor 13:13) That is surely true. But what has kept me in almost constant meditation this week is hope. Hope is what keeps me going. Yes, faith and love are ultimately important, yet sometimes there is so much mental "baggage" we load onto faith, and to love, that they become too heavy to carry, don't they?

I think of the passage in Mark in which the father pleads with Jesus to heal his son, and Jesus tells the father to believe. The father responds, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24) I can relate to that, can't you? In some moments of life, unbelief feels far more real and powerful than belief. I have faith, but sometimes.... it just doesn't feel like enough to help me through tough times....

And love.... yes, "love makes the world go 'round," but love also sometimes feels like it makes the world stop in its tracks when a loved one dies, or a partner or spouse says, "I just don't love you anymore," or when we suddenly realize we do NOT love our neighbor as we should. Frankly, some days, I don't love my neighbor at all -- whoever that particular neighbor might be that day -- someone who doesn't agree with me socially, religiously, or politically. It's hard to love when I'm frowning and giving a particular gesture to a driver behind me going way too fast on our slippery, icy roads!

Yes, faith and love are a bottom line for me, but it's hope that keeps me going. When faith is fleeting and love is lost, hope throws me a rope to hang on to for dear life when all else seems for naught and lost in the shadows of unbelief and love gone away or awry. How about you?

My greatest hope, which some of you reading these words already know, is that some day, some how.... I'll be with my mother again -- in some form of energy, or resurrected personhood. She's been gone from my sight for twenty-five years and yet she is with me every day in my greatest hope. Will that happen? Will I be with her again in some form? I don't have a clue. But I know this -- I'd rather live *with* the hope of being with her again than *without* that hope.

I believe the opposite of hope is despair.... and despair is debilitating and stifling. Hope is action oriented and renewing. The good thing.... the good thing is I know I am not alone in my hopes, my despairs, my faith and unbelief, my love and my not-so-loving days. We're all in this thing called life together. And as corny and shallow as that may sound, it is the one aspect of life we share. We are in it together, whether we like or love one another or not, regardless of our faith or faithlessness. We are a people of hope, if we choose to be....

I had a quote placed on the front of the bulletins for this morning's service that reads, "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul -- and sings the tunes without the words - - and never stops at all." Emily Dickinson surely was right when she composed those words.....

Blessings to all this chilly morn in Maine..... Susan