

Sunday Morning Reflection from God's Treehouse

A Posture of Hope

SCRIPTURE

*Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and shield.
Our heart is glad in him
because we trust in his holy name.
Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.
(Psalm 33:20-22)*

MESSAGE

Dear People, the days are indeed challenging. Hurricanes, floods, election season, world crises. In anxious and divided times, in the exhaustion of mucking out a home or office, anxiety and despair have a way of slipping a foothold into the door of the heart. Acknowledging this reality, we consider two questions this Sunday morning: Are you leading with good cheer and a posture of hope?... Or by a cloud of pessimism? Has your worldview been changed by the good news of Jesus Christ?

Jesus teaches us not to retreat from life's challenges into a disposition of dread by instructing us to: ***Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down*** (Luke 21:34a). Our gracious and loving God gives us the gift of the ability to choose; to decide how we will walk through each day. We get to choose each and every morning how we will present ourselves before God and one another. Peter Marty, Editor of *The Christian Century* (September 2024 issue) states factually: "Complaining about life rarely brings satisfying results. And cynicism about the world around us is just a way of keeping distance and exempting oneself from responsibility or involvement... Hope is not some silly conviction that everything in society and politics is just fine. It isn't fine. Hope merely visualizes a better way—a way to walk into the future, and to create a future."

The Apostle Paul encourages us to trust the promise that God walks with us through both the joys and the sorrows: the relief that our Chapel Sanctuary is still standing strong, and the sorrow for the time, energy and cost of tossing out everything stored below the Sanctuary (including, close to my heart, the racks of Children and Youth Nativity Costumes for Christmas Eve.)

The song that has been playing in my soul through the clean-up of Hurricane Helene is *Goodness of God*. I invite you to click the [link](#), soak in the lyrics, and remember to whom you belong.

SONG

*All my life you have been faithful
All my life you have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God.
(Goodness of God, Bethel Music, sung by CeCeWinans)*

PRAYER

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance invites us to join together in corporate prayer in the wake of Hurricane Helene:

God of our life, whose presence sustains us in every circumstance, in the aftermath of storm and distress, we welcome the restoring power of your love and compassion.

We open our hearts in sorrow, gratitude, and **hope:** that those who have been spared nature's fury as well as those whose lives are changed forever by ravages of wind and water may find solace, sustenance, and strength in the days of recovery and reflection that come.

We are thankful for the generous grace of days of preparation; for the wise counsel of experts and the generous collaboration of so many communities, that in the face of the storm kept many out of harm's way, and lessened the effects of wind and water on others.

We are grateful that dire predictions did not result in the worst-case scenario for all, yet still served to support our best efforts at preparation and immediate relief. At the same time, we open ourselves to the stories of those for whom the Hurricane was not a near miss: **communities—including Siesta Key**—who have been deeply affected, whose livelihood, homes and stability has been destroyed.

We pray in grief, remembering the lives that have been lost.

We lift our voices in sorrow and compassion for families who have lost loved ones, homes, or livelihood.

We ask for sustaining courage for those who are suffering; wisdom and diligence among agencies and individuals assessing damage and directing relief efforts; **and for generosity to flow as powerfully as the storm surge**, as we, your people, respond to the deep human needs beginning to emerge in the wake of the storm.

Lord, in these days of relief, assessment and response, **open our eyes, our hearts, and our hands to the needs of your children and the movements of your Spirit**, who flows in us like the river whose streams makes glad the city of God, and the hearts of all who dwell in it, and in You. In the name of Christ the Healer we pray, Amen.

*Grace & Peace,
Pastor Ruth*