

Sharing Hope — Pt. 3

We live in a wonderful and dangerous world. The most beautiful things are often the things that are most dangerous or inaccessible. Those things that arouse awe in us are at once enjoyed and feared. This is the source of worship for all humanity. Those who are of the Abrahamic religions understand that there is but one God who created everything.

It is in this God that we hope. The same God who put the oceans and seas in their places also created storms to keep them in balance. The same God who pushed up the mountains created a world in which we have earthquakes. The God who gives us rain causes rivers to flood. It is for us to recognize the beauty and danger in this world and work with it.

The complex nature of creation extends to our lives as well. Every person is born into complexity that will forever be beyond us to understand. We are born into families that have a history. We are born into a culture, a language, a religion — or lack thereof. We have experiences that are at once common and unique.

Human beings are fantastically resilient. We are especially resilient when we find an environment that accepts us with all our scars, quirks and stories. There is a difference in owning the less desirable parts of who we are and making them the

center of our identity. This leads us to two ways that we can express and share hope as we live our lives. One of the great gifts that God has given us through the Bible is the ability to hold tension in life without fear. I am convinced that one of the reasons for our current divisiveness in society is that we have lost the ability to hold two sides of an argument in tension long enough to resolve it.

People who can live with complexity and not be afraid are hope givers. They reduce anxiety when there is disagreement. They think clearly because they know that they are not responsible for solving the complexity, but rather learning how to live with it. These are the people who face great difficulty and still express joy. These are the ones who are unbothered when they do not get their way and find a way to see that their project succeeds, even though they would have done it differently. They are hopeful not because of what they experience, but because of what they know.

Those who take a piece of wood and craft it into art do not look at the raw product. They look beyond what they see because of what they know it will become. Hopeful people look at the complexities of life and do not act on what they see in front of them. They look beyond them and see to the other side —

because of what they know.

Life can be hard on us from time to time. Hopeful people look back to those times when things were good. Not for sentimental reasons, but to find a foundation. Hopeful people look beyond current difficulties and put their hope in that which is certain and sure — God.

Psalm 42:1-5 Looks back and forward in hope.

To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.

As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and behold the face of God?

My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me continually,

“Where is your God?”

These things I remember,

as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. (RSV)

Complexity and tensions in life are reminders that we are alive. They are reminders that we are part of a wonderfully made world. They are reminders that we inhabit this world with other beings who have abilities and hopes and dreams that are not the same as ours. This does not need to cause chaos or division. It makes for a hopeful and interesting journey if we will let it. Fear drives the worst of our impulses — hope brings out the best.

Blind spots

It seems like when one is driving, having a rearview mirror and side mirrors should be enough to be able to see all around. One doesn't have to be driving for long before you realize that even with these tools, there is still a blind spot you cannot see.

It's close and you can almost see everything. There's a difference, however, between almost and entirely! No matter how well you might drive, checking your blind spot is a must.

The children of Israel should have been careful to see their situation more clearly. They had been led out of Egyptian slavery by a powerful God and a leader, Moses, who cared about them. They had seen many miracles, from the plagues in Egypt to when God led them out through the parted Red Sea and so many other occasions when He fed them in the wilderness (Exodus 7-12, 14, 16). Yet, they had a problem in staying faithful to God and often longed to go back to Egypt (Numbers 11:4-5).

In order to help them stay faithful and see the

bigger picture, we have the instructions given in the book of Deuteronomy.

Moses tells the people what is in store for them as they cross the Jordan river into the Promised Land. The book is full of blessings and curses. Blessings if they would obey and curses if they

ignored God. Part of this instruction was for them to teach their children. Deut. 6:7, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” God's Word was to be an everyday part of their lives, so they would not have blind spots when it came to their trust in God.

We have been given God's Word. It teaches us and equips us for every good work (II Tim. 3:16-17). However, merely owning a copy does not do us any good. We have to study it. We must apply it. We must teach it and pass it on to others. Doing so ensures us of not having our own blind spots but enables us to avoid many hazards we will run into in this life.



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