

## There is Always Hope / October 6, 2019

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There is a well known cartoon depicting a very non-threatening person walking around the street holding up a placard in the fashion of a demonstrator. The placard, however, had no message on it - it was totally empty. A bystander noticed this odd form of demonstration and remarked to a companion, "well, I guess he doesn't want to offend anyone."

Sometimes we might think it would be better to get through life trying not to create too much havoc or uncomfortableness for anyone. There certainly are people like that - living in their little world not wanting to be noticed for fear of being asked to be involved or to make a decision. But the truth is that sooner or later it will all catch up to us and we no longer will be able to stand in the shadows. Expectations create shadows as well. Let it be clear that creating expectations sometimes push people into the shadows that they do not want to be in. Sometimes we also place unrealistic expectations on ourselves or even God. It is sometimes an unhealthy place to be.

Our scriptures this morning suggest that there is a vision that God has written down. Habakkuk challenges the vision of God - assuming to know it already. God simply speaks of patience to allow the vision to happen. It was a broader picture than what Habakkuk thought it to be.

Paul, in the 2nd reading, reminds Timothy of the enthusiasm he should have realizing the charisma that he has already received from the spirit. The Spirit that empowered Timothy also empowers us to hold the vision of the Jesus up as our model. Paul suggests that the power of the Holy Spirit, accepted by us, makes us strong, loving and wise. What more could we ask for. Perhaps the confirming realization that all of the above is true would be what we would ask for. And yet the story continues and the Gospel unfolds and becomes even more a truth than we perhaps are willing to admit - "if I had the faith of a mustard seed I can do anything."

But sometimes that is not the way it happens for us. From our earliest memories we have been told in various degrees what we can and cannot do - what we can expect and not expect. It has been assumed by many that they must meet everyone's expectations. The church also has required much of us. Follow the law - be generous - have faith - hold on to values that last and most of all don't give up. Forming community and living in that community requires much of us. The above mentioned ideals plus a realization of knowing that I am the church and that I have a responsibility to accept my charisma and use it for the good of the community.

It sounds wonderful - it also is challenging. Changes in our lives do not come easy. We live in a very precarious time. Unemployment and income are at an all time low. The trickle down affect has touch many areas of many people's lives. Relationships are not as secure as they might otherwise be. Our youth find it scary when they look at the job market and parents have nightmares when they look at the cost of education these days. Addiction and disease embrace many more today. Our brothers and sisters are starving and homeless right in our own backyards. We do not know what to do. Many of us are feeling very thin-skinned and tested. We do not see a light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. And the expectations placed on us do not get any easier. Yes, there is reason for us to have concern for the future.

But there is hope. There is always hope. The charisma that you and I have received is the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives. We have been called/named and empowered by the Almighty one. We are required to do no less than he would in exposing the wounds of life and to do what we can to heal them. Only together can that happen. Every man/woman/teenager and child have been empowered by God with the presence of the greatest gift anyone could ever receive - The hand and heart of the Creator. Believe it and live it, my brothers and sisters. Know that your life counts. Know that the Gospel will not allow us to stay in the shadows of life. It is useless to think that we can walk through life without ever being wounded. Jesus wore the wound that lasts forever. Now he gives us the means to heal. Just wait and see!