

I Offer You Hope

Homily by Reverend Rebecca M. Bryan

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A number of years ago I was struggling as an adult to make peace with my mother, when a friend offered me a gift that made a huge difference. I was part of an international online music course learning to sing songs of devotion in another religious tradition. The leaders were a mother/daughter duet and together sang gorgeous music. The love between them was palpable.

This day, we were singing a love song to life through the eyes of feminine love. The lead singer picked up on the ambivalence some of us were feeling and said,

"I know that not everyone is blessed to have known the love of a mother.

I have been blessed to know that love,"
she said, turning to her mother.

"I want to offer you my mother's love.

Really. There is more of it that I can use alone.

If you've never known that love, please take some of mine."

As peculiar as it felt, I thought to myself, "what do I have to lose?" And, right then and there, in the confines of my heart and with an open mind, I took her up on her offer. I leaned in and borrowed her mother's love.

I have called on that borrowed love. The results have been miraculous. I just needed to say yes to her offer.

We are living in tumultuous times, my friends. Yes, the world has experienced tumultuous times before. As we prepare to enter our church's 300th anniversary year, we know that others before us have known war, have worked to stop injustice, and have loved deeply. This church and its members went through the Revolutionary War!

What we need now is hope. Not because hope is a panacea, or even because we think hope will change everything on its own. No, we need hope because it is what will carry us through and allow us to believe in the power of love and make that love real by being the light in this world.

We need hope like we need love, friendship, and gratitude. Our children and grandchildren need to feel our hope, just like they need reminders of how good and beautiful this world is.

In her poem "Hope is the thing with feathers," Emily Dickinson writes:

Hope is the thing with feathers -

That perches in the soul -

And sings the tune without the words -

And never stops - at all -

Things can feel overwhelming right now. The needs around us are great; the options are both voluminous and narrow. Time is of the essence.

But take heart, because we are not alone in this work of justice and love. None of us can solve the problems of the world alone. What we can do is offer our true and beautiful selves to this world.

In a personal note to ministerial colleagues, Rev. Peggy Clarke, Senior Minister at Community Church of New York, encourages me when she writes, "I am only one person and the needs of this world are far greater than I can meet, so I offer my one life to whomever is before me, and I hope others will do the same so together we can become balms for the wounds of the world."

Let us be beacons of hope to those around us, remembering that there is goodness, and yes, hope, for what is to come and what may be.

If you find yourself low on hope these days, please, borrow mine and let it renew your own. Then you too can share your hope with others. We need one another.

Together, in our sharing and becoming, we can carry both the burdens and the light of this world as we work for peace.

Amen and Blessed Be!