

READY FOR HOPE

August 11, 2019

Pentecost 9

[Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-10](#)

[Luke 12:32-40](#)

(prayer)

There is a wonderful [scene](#) in the 1970s epic TV miniseries [Roots](#), where Omoro holds his newborn son up to the african night sky, names him and proclaims "Behold, the only thing greater than yourself!"

It is a ceremony that Kunte Kinte (when a slave in Virginia) repeats for his newborn daughter under the american night sky: "Behold, the only thing greater than you!"

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This past week, I read a [BBC article](#) that noted that emerging research indicates that the Milky Way galaxy is not as flat as had been thought previously. It is warped and twisted as a result of interactions with nearby galaxies. In fairness, the old model was based on observations of maybe only 10% of our galaxy's stars. The new research (out of Warsaw) involves keen observations of the Milky Way's brightest stars.

And this is just an emerging theory --- more observation and study will confirm it or replace it.

The wonder of the evolution of human thought and discovery is that the hard and fast truths that we hold, have to be prepared to give way to new revelation.

Just imagine what we might know tomorrow!

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Because of presumed existence of dark matter, scientists have determined that only about 5% of the stuff within the universe is *visible*. Most of "creation" is still shrouded in mystery.

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We are part of something greater than ourselves. We are children of mystery and wonder -- destined to discover more about who we are and how we fit into the big picture.

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Of course, mystery breeds uncertainty; and uncertainty breeds worry.

The last half of chapter twelve in the gospel of Luke parallels parts of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew. Luke 12 is a sermon Jesus preached about worry. In the section that precedes what we heard this morning Jesus teaches: *Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. ... Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ... Your Father knows [what you need]. Instead, strive for his kingdom.*

Jesus follows that up with what we heard today: *Do not be afraid ... [God's Realm is a gift]. Think and plan beyond yourself.* Verse 33 says "*Sell your possessions, and give alms.*" This is what Alanis Morrisette was preaching about here last week -- do not hoard compassion! It is one thing to be concerned about having *enough*, but it is wasted ministry to be so greedy that enough is never enough. Today, Jesus invites his followers to continue thinking beyond themselves: to trust in the grace and promise of God's sovereignty and to support those in their midst who do not have enough

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([give alms](#)) -- this teaching in Luke 12 is another way that Jesus indicated that to love God and our neighbours as ourselves is the greatest commandment.

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Jesus asked his followers to put trust into a path that was not clearly laid out for them, but whose destination was the perfect and peaceful Kingdom of God.

Jesus wanted the promise of God to be a front and centre hope for his followers in every moment --- they were to be ready for it to be realized at any time.

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The author of Hebrews compared this Christian calling to the obedience of Abraham who trusted in God's promise of a land of legacy. Abraham and his family set out from Ur, following the waters of the [fertile crescent](#), not knowing where they were going. When they settled in Canaan, they lived as nomads in a foreign land, but they still trusted in a promise of a "city whose architect and builder was God."

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All of this is pointing to faith defined by hope.

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In early May of 2000 (just after I had my interview for the vacant minister position at St. David's in fact), I attended one of the best church events I have ever been to: "Renovations 2000". It was not about *building* projects, but *remaking the church for the 21st century*.

One of the top notch speakers was the American progressive, evangelical pastor, writer and theologian, [Jim Wallis](#). One of the memorable lines spoken by this editor of Sojourners Magazine was "Hope is believing in spite of the evidence and then watching the evidence change."

Nineteen-plus years later and this message is one of the hallmarks of my faith.

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Luke's gospel instructs us today to be *ready for hope*. To add the that to Jim Wallis' proverb, Jesus wants us to be watching for the evidence to change.

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It is easy to get discouraged in a world where hope seems unrealistic in so many ways.

Tomorrow, I will be officiating at a memorial service in Nisku for a person in their 30s who died in a highway accident. There is no way to make sense of that. My theology of God does not allow me to pretend that God needed a new flower in heaven's garden or that this tragedy happened for a higher purpose. I have to accept that God is as heartbroken as we are.

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Jesus preached not to worry, but I do.

Jesus preached to be ready for hope, but sometimes, I have trouble doing that.

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And, yet I refuse to ignore the reality of mystery beyond what affects me.

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Like Alex Haley's ancestors, I can look up at the night sky and stare out into the universe and proclaim, there is something greater than myself.

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There is a path before me... even if I can only see a little of it at a time.

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I will seek enough faith to trust in what the author of the first chapter of Genesis believed: *God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good.*

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We live in the midst of mystery *and* goodness.

I will hold hope in that promise.

And... I will watch for the evidence of that promise to come to light.

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Let us pray:

Great is your faithfulness, O God. Help us to trust beyond our understand and control. Be with us along the way. Amen.

#489VU (tune #490VU) "When Love is Found"