UHPC WORSHIP—JUNE 23,2019

SERMON TOPIC: “ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE”

I can’t recall anywhere in the Bible where Jehovah God in Trinity has instructed humanity to become hopeless and discouraged. There have been times when we are called to consecrate ourselves through separation from worldly activities by self-denial, fasting, and prayer. At times the circumstances of life can be relentlessly oppressive and challenging to the point where people want to “throw in the towel” and give up. ***For example, we hear David in Psalm 143 crying out to the LORD for help. He said that his enemies were pursuing him and crushing his life to the ground, making him sit in darkness… Therefore, his spirit fainted within him and his heart was appalled. But right after that, he turned his thoughts to remember the days of old and thought on all God’s marvelous deeds. He meditated on the works of God’s hands. Then he asked the LORD to let him hear of God’s steadfast love in the morning, …and to teach him the way he should go… to save him from his enemies, for he flees to his God for refuge. God’s arm is always outstretched to us, urging us to return to Him. Come to Him and find peace and rest, joy, and contentment. THESE CANNOT BE FOUND IN THE THINGS OF THE WORLD. ONLY IN THE WORD OF GOD AND IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN ANYONE FIND REST, PEACE, JOY, UNDERSTANDING, HOPE, COURAGE, AND STRENGTH TO LIVE THIS EARTHLY LIFE SUCCESSFULLY.***

I am sure some of us can identify with the condition of hopelessness and discouragement from time to time and may be wondering what to do about it. Especially in the days in which we are living in the U.S.A. So many people are feeling distressed, oppressed, uncertain, and afraid of what the future might hold for them and for their children. It would seem that even nature has become heavy, dreary, cloudy, and dark reflecting the darkness that is permeating people’s hearts and lives. What are people to do when they are working two and three jobs and still at the end of the month are unable to meet their bills? What are people to do when all the established foundations of truth and righteousness on which the nation once stood, are being removed? What is happening when what is false is being twisted to become truth, and what is scripturally and foundationally correct becomes questionable or made to appear to be unacceptable and wrong? Psalm 11:3 asks: “IF THE FOUNDATIONS ARE DESTROYED, WHAT CAN THE RIGHTEOUS DO?” Then the Psalmist responds: “The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’s Throne is in heaven. His eyes behold and examines humankind. … IN OTHER WORDS, LIFT IT ALL UP TO GOD IN FAITH TO THE GOD WHO NEVER CHANGES, NEVER MOVES, AND WHO SEES AND KNOWS ALL THINGS. LIFT IT UP THROUGH PRAYER AS DAVID DID. REMEMBER THE DEEDS OF JEHOVAH GOD OF OLD AND KNOW THAT OUR GOD HAS NOT CHANGED. We have a job to do. The people of God and the church cannot simply sit back and observe what is happening without responding with action and prayer. Like David, we must cry out to God for help and put our trust in the LORD, Jehovah our God, our refuge, our fortress, our stronghold, and our deliverer. If all we do is wallow in despair, we will grow faint and weak. Then our spirit will be crushed to the ground, and the enemies will gain victory over us and rejoice over us.

Here are some Scriptures that might help us in times of discouragement and hopelessness:  **Psalm 68: 1** says: “Let God arise, and all His enemies be scattered…” **Psalm 110: 1** declares: “The Lord said unto my lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” **Psalm 118: 14:** “The Lord God is my strength and shield; He has become my Salvation.” WHEN OUR ENEMIES ARE UNLEASHED TO OPPRESS THE CHILDREN OF GOD, WE ARE INSTRUCTED TO: RECOUNT THE WAYS OF THE LORD AND ENCOURAGE OURSELVES IN HOPE.” Say words like: “I shall not die but live and recount the deeds of the LORD.” (**Psalm 118: 17)** Speak the Word of God to our-selves for it has power to chase the adversary. This was how Jesus whipped Satan and chased him away when he tempted Jesus during His forty days of fasting in the wilderness. **Remember also that:** “Greater is He who is in us than He who is in the world.” “…Christ in us is our hope of glory.” Sing hymns, songs, and spirituals. Clap your hands and move your feet and give praise unto the Most- High God. Put on some Gospel music and don’t forget to pray with faith.

We hear in **1st Kings 19** of Elijah, one of the greatest prophets of God, being downcast in his soul, saying: “O Jehovah, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! JEZEBEL IS ABOUT TO KILL ME AFTER I FOUGHT AGAINST HER EVIL PROPHETS AND KILLED THEM. (paraphrasing) The LORD tried to encourage Elijah by sending angels to attend his way and to feed him divinely with baked cakes and water as he was in the wilderness and hiding in the cave of despair. But eventually, when he insisted, he had had enough, God gave him his wish to depart this world. GOD GIVES US FREE WILL AND CHOICE, and Elijah insisted he wanted to go and be with His God. And so, the Father told him to go and anoint two new kings—Hazael and Jehu, and Elisha as prophet to replace himself. THE DYE WAS CAST AND A DIVINE PLAN WAS PUT IN PLACE TO TAKE ELIJAH AWAY AFTER A LITTLE WHILE. Still we know that Elijah was lifted up into heaven. He did not die a natural death. This may be my own speculation, but it could be that the LORD elected not to let him die in the usual way because it was not his appointed time. (He kind of forced God’s hand to hasten his exit.)

Somewhere, somehow, Elijah got tired of fighting the forces of evil and said: “Enough, is enough! HAVE YOU EVER BEEN THERE? Some of us can identify with that feeling. Have you ever asked yourself: “Why are you cast down, O my soul? Remember not to stay in your cave of despair. God wants to know… “Elijah, what are you doing in this cave? Get up and eat something or else you will faint on the journey.” YES, it is sure that discouragement will come. It can appear like a GREAT BIG GIANT OR A JEZEBEL. YES, THAT GIANT OR THAT JEZEBEL MIGHT TRY TO DRIVE FEAR INTO YOUR HEART SO THAT YOU WANT TO FLEE TO THE MOUNTAIN OR INTO A CAVE AND NOT WANT TO COME OUT. But we just heard an account of a man who was possessed with Legions of demons. He lived outdoors in the cemetery. No one and nothing could contain him. He broke every shackle or chain that was placed upon him to restrain him. NOTHING WORKED. But one day Jesus came by and the demons in the man recognized Jesus as the Son of God and cried out: **“What have we to do with you, Jesus? Have you come to destroy us?”** The oppressive demons asked Jesus to send them into some swine nearby. When He cast them out of the man, they went into the swine and the entire herd ran into the lake and drowned. NOTICE THAT THESE DEMONS NEEDED SOMETHING OR SOMEONE TO INHABIT. FIRST, THEY WERE IN THE MAN AND NEXT THEY ENTERED INTO THE SWINE.  **But Jesus was the only one who could deliver this man from his oppression by these demons.** What do you think would be their response in the community? Shouldn’t they want to keep Jesus around to finish off any other demons lurking around? That would seem like the right thing to do. But not so. The people became afraid and insisted that Jesus leave them alone. TO ME THAT IS STRANGE AND AMAZING! When people see the mighty works of Jesus, why do they want Him to leave?

When we think about this in our time and for our day, do we find that when Jesus is mentioned or when He comes to deliver and set people free from oppression, discouragement, fear, hopelessness, distress, etc. --that quite often He is not tolerated? Some do not want Him to manifest His power because they want to stay in their mess and continue in their cults or other ungodly behavior. It is their comfort zone… Do not disturb us! When the man wanted to follow Jesus from place to place, Jesus told him to go back to his village and evangelize there. Tell them what had just taken place so others would believe and even be delivered.

LET ME ASK YOU TODAY: “ARE YOU DISCOURAGED? DO YOU FEEL LIKE ENOUGH IS ENOUGH? REMEMBER THAT AS A BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN BELIEVER AND FOLLOWER OF CHRIST JESUS, YOU ARE ALSO AN INHERITOR OF THE BLESSINGS OF ABRAHAM. You / we belong to those who are of the righteousness of faith. We are no longer under the stricture and oppression of the Law which was like a tutor to show us our sin, but when faith came in Christ Jesus, we were delivered from that oppression. We who are now baptized in Christ are heirs according to the Promise. I INVITE YOU TO SAY AFTER ME: --FEAR YOU ARE NO LONGER WELCOME HERE! MY NAME IS NO LONGER “REGRET.” TORMENTING SPIRITS IN THE NAME OF CHRIST JESUS LEAVE AND FLEE NOW TO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA. FOR OUR HOPE IS STEADFAST IN JEHOVAH GOD IN TRINITY. JEZEBEL’S PROPHETS HAVE BEEN BURNED AND DESTROYED BY THE POWER OF THE NAME, THE CROSS, AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS THE CHRIST.

Elijah decided he wanted to fold up his tent and move on, and he did. But God gave him a fantastic departure that was never seen before or since. EITHER WAY SATAN IS DEFEATED AND GOD IS VICTORIOUS. So be encouraged for if God be for you/us… who can be against you/us. Yes, the darkness may fall sometimes, but by God’s Grace do not allow it to remain. HOPE THOU IN GOD WHO IS THE HEALTH OF OUR COUNTENANCE AND OUR GOD.

SO, IF YOU ARE FEELING BURDENED TODAY… REMEMBER THAT BURDENS ARE LIFTED AT CALVARY. ARE YOU UNDER THE WEATHER? CALL ON THE NAME OF YESHUA—HA—MESSIACH/ JESUS THE MESSIAH. TELL HIM THAT YOU ARE CASTING ALL YOUR CARES UPON HIM WHO CARES FOR YOU. --TELL HIM THAT ALL YOUR HOPE AND YOUR TRUST IS IN HIM WHO IS THE LIFTER OF YOUR HEAD. --REMIND HIM THAT THE WORD SAYS THAT HIS YOKE IS EASY AND HIS BURDEN IS LIGHT. --TELL HIM THAT YOUR ENEMIES ARE TOO MANY AND TOO STRONG, AND YOU NEED BACK-UP-HELP LIKE HE DID FOR DANIEL THROUGH ARCH-ANGEL MICHAEL. -- ASK HIM TO OPEN UP HEAVEN AND RELEASE YOUR GUARDIAN ANGELS AND MINISTERING SPIRIT TO HELP YOU DO BATTLE AGAINST THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS AND RULERS OF DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD. --ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GROAN AND TO INTERCEDE FOR YOU IN TONES YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO UNDERSTAND, FOR SOMETIMES YOU DON’T KNOW HOW TO PRAY ARIGHT. --ASK JESUS TO DELIVER YOU/US FROM EVIL AND TO KEEP YOU/US FROM TEMPTATION. --TELL JESUS, YOU ARE ONE OF HIS CHOSEN DISCIPLES THAT SATAN HATES AND IS TRYING TO DESTROY YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES. --TELL JESUS, YOU ARE DEPENDING ON HIM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BEAT THE JEZEBELS AND THE LEGIONS TO DUST AND SCATTER THEM LIKE CHAFF BEFORE THE WIND. AND --LET GOD ARISE AND LET ALL OUR ENEMIES BE SCATTERED. -- DO NOT LET THEM TRIUMPH OVER US. LIKE ELIJAH WE DECLARE: --ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! IT IS TIME FOR RELIEF AND DELIVERANCE.

I BELIEVE AND I DECLARE THAT IT IS TIME FOR ANOTHER DIMENSION INTO GOD’S GLORY AND VICTORY. BE ENCOURAGED AND HAVE HOPE. GOD IS ON YOUR SIDE. GET UP OUT OF THE CAVE OF DESPAIR… GOD IS YOUR HELPER. GIVE THANKS AND PRAISE FOR ALL GOD HAS ALREADY DONE AND REMEMBER THAT HEAVEN IS GOD’S THRONE AND EARTH IS GOD’S FOOTSTOOL. WHEN THE FOUNDATIONS ARE SHAKING, REMEMBER TO BE STILL AND KNOW THAT GOD IS AND GOD’S STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER. BLESSED BE GOD WHO LOADETH US WITH BENEFITS. THE LORD OF HOST IS WITH US; THE GOD OF JACOB IS OUR REFUGE. MAY ALL THE DEVIL’S STRATEGIES BE DISMANTELED AND DESTROYED; BUT LET THE PRINCIPLES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS PREVAIL IN THE LAND AND OVER ALL THE LIVES OF GOD: ’S PEOPLE FOREVER.

IN CHRIST JESUS…AMEN.

Rev. Brenda R. Berry: Pastor/Moderator

Univ. Hts. Presby. Chr.