

“Holding on to possibility”

June 8, 2008

Text: Romans 4:13-22, Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

I.

As human beings and certainly as Christians, we are a *hopeful* people. Think about it: it’s ingrained into the DNA of our spirit.

As children, we hope to grow and to be able to do more things and to be more like an older sibling, perhaps, or a neighbor down the street. As youth, we hope to be more independent ... to be able to have our own room and stay up late and come and go as we please.

And then, as the whole world of adult life opens up, our hopes soar (anxieties, too, to be sure); but still, our hopes soar ... and along with them, possibilities of all kinds. Always, possibility is out there.

- The possibility that we’ll be able to prepare ourselves well for life ... with a good education or training program and be able to take advantage of the countless opportunities that are out there.
- The possibility of falling in love and perhaps getting married and having a family.
- The possibility of living a full life ... of having a meaningful and fulfilling career ... of being a good citizen and participating in our community.

Always, possibility is out there. And of course, that’s good news—news we need to hear, especially for those of us who are going through whatever challenging times.

II.

Holding on to possibility.

1. The possibility that our bodies will be restored to fullness of health ... the possibility that any pain or hurt we might have incurred in life will diminish or go away ...
2. The possibility that our financial circumstances will improve ... that we’ll get the job ... or receive the promotion ...
3. The possibility that our men and women in uniform will be brought home from Iraq ... that health care will be available to all people ... that attaining an education will be, everyday, more possible ...

4. The possibility that whatever struggle were going through in a KEY relationship will work out.

Always, there are possibilities out there. **Holding on to possibility.**

Now, some of us may have our moments of protracted pessimism, but even pessimists are often really *closet* persons of hope. Pessimism can sometimes be a cover we hide behind because we don't want to be disappointed.

For some folks, to be too hopeful is stressful; it makes them feel vulnerable and uneasy, as elements out of their past/ present come too close to the surface.

III.

Holding on to possibility is an act of faith. It asks something of us. It asks us to look for the positive and to think positive. It asks us, too, to get outside of ourselves and place our trust in God.

That's exactly what **Abraham** and **Sarah** did ... against all odds. You'll recall that Sarah had been barren ... and yet, God had told them that they'd become the father and mother of many nations.

Abraham and Sarah **held on to possibility**, at the foot of a faith that was at times agonizing ... and in a spirit of trust. They trusted God, against all odds. Throw the odds out the window.

When the spirit of God is on the move, when the vision of God rises up with new purpose, the odds don't matter. It's a new day with a new hope, everything changes.

Hope is a powerful force, friends, that pulsates in our minds, hearts and spirits. It's linked to the impulse for LIFE. **Holding on to possibility.**

- Never giving up.
- Never stop hoping that things can change.
- That love and caring ... and doing the right thing can, day after day, make a difference.
- Again, our acts of love ... our spirit of love; they build up hope.

Again, LOVE is the key. Certainly, it was this way with JESUS. The way God's love shined in him and through him. And compassion ... and forgiveness ... and healing were part of the love.

IV.

In our reading from **Matthew's** gospel, a leader of the synagogue comes to Jesus. He's desperate. Apparently, his daughter has died ... but still, he hasn't given up. No doubt, he knows about Jesus; we're not told under what circumstances. In any event, he seeks out Jesus ...

My daughter has just died,** he says, **but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.

Talk about **holding on to possibility!** Filled with compassion, Jesus goes to the home ... and amidst the doubt and disbelief of a crowd that had gathered, he restores the girl to life. And the people are stunned and amazed.

About that time, along the way, a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years had spotted Jesus. No doubt, she, too, had heard of him ... or had some experience of his healing powers. She's desperate, too—desperate to be healed.

Twelve years has been a long time to suffer this affliction. **Holding on to possibility,** she says to herself,

If I can only touch his cloak, I will be made well. Imagine that—such faith!

And coming up behind Jesus, she manages to touch him ... and Jesus sees her and realizes what is happening. Turning to her, he says ...

Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well. And instantly the woman was made well.

V.

If we think about it, this woman could be any of us going through tough times ... where, everyday, she seems to be losing ... can't get ahead. Can't seem to get in the right place at the right time. At every turn, it seems, rejection after rejection. Over time, frustration builds up.

Some of us can identify. Life can throw us a curve now and then.

But still—and this is the point: she hasn't given up. There's still a flicker of hope in her spirit. We human beings are like that; and we ought to be. Why? Because, truth be told,

- we never know what tomorrow is going to bring ... in spite of yesterday.
- We never know what possibilities are going to unfold in the human spirit ... or in any human situation.

Always, stuff is happening. And things can change. That's why networking is so important in everything we do in life. Because we never know where that new contact, that new relationship, is going to take us.

One of the major benefits of the internet (and, believe me, there are all kinds of problems with the internet as well) ... but one of the major benefits is the, almost exponential, extent to which we can make contact with other persons, other situations, other ideas and other programs.

VI.

Holding on to possibility. It makes all the difference.

- With Abraham and Sarah, against all odds.
- And with the daughter of the leader in the synagogue ... who they thought had died; and the father, understandably, desperate.
- and with the afflicted woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years.

Never giving up. Staying positive. **Holding on to possibility.**

I remember growing up; I always thought the future was wide open. I thought all kinds of things were possible. In sports ... in school ... in community ... through the church ... in some career. Why? First off, because my father was a very positive, supportive person and was always encouraging us. But also, because all around me, stuff was happening.

During my early years, America was riding high on the wings of our triumphs in World War II. There was this phenomenon called *the American spirit*. And at its best, it was really something. It overflowed with hope and the promise of a new day. And everywhere around the world, it seemed, people longed for a taste of it.

When I was in high school, the young and charismatic John F. Kennedy was elected President. The Civil Rights movement was gaining steam. Soon, there was the Peace Corps ... and we landed a man on the moon. Possibility seemed to be everywhere.

And now, some years later, across America, the unthinkable rise of an African American as the nominee of a major political party for President of the United States. And it might well have been a woman, and no doubt will be one day soon. No matter what your political persuasion, talk about possibility!! Possibility is on the rise.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *I Have a Dream Speech* comes immediately to mind:

I have a dream today ... a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!

Those words still resonate in our spirit. What a high vision of hope and possibility.

Holding on to possibility, friends. Always, God is on the move ... the spirit is building up ... love is transforming human hearts ... good things are happening.

VII.

Friends, every day, what we do and how we embrace life affect the way possibilities are realized in our lives.

Which is to suggest that what we do matters. The choices we make every day matter. The little things; the big things. They all add up.

LOVE matters ...

- and when our life and spirit are filled with love ...
- when we conduct our affairs and interact in our relationships as a BIG person, with a BIG spirit, which means *taking the high road* ... everything around us is changed.

Hope and possibility rise up; because hope feeds off of love. Hope that says to every human being: *You're a child of God ... created in the image of God ... and you're loved and valued ... more than you'll ever know.* Getting in touch with this love ... feeling it ... seeing it in the faces of others.

What this love does, friends, is it takes us to higher spiritual ground. And when that happens, everything around us is affected.

When we live our lives in this way, we feel encouraged ... and lifted up ... like the afflicted woman in Matthew 9, to whom Jesus said: ***Take heart ... your faith has made you well.***

All praise be unto God! Amen!

Dr. Jeffrey E. Frantz
Miami Lakes Congregational Church, *United Church of Christ*
6701 Miami Lakeway South
Miami Lakes, FL 33014
On the web at www.mlchurch.com

