

Hope As The Road To Revival

On Sunday, Samantha Hasty shared her last sermon with us before moving back to her hometown of San Antonio to plant a church there.

1. Warm-up Question: What's your hometown? Tell us something you love or hate about it.
2. The primary point of Sunday's sermon was: Hope has the power to spark revival. So let's explore what hope is and how we find it. Samantha defined hope as "that small feeling in you that said something impossible was actually possible."
 - a. Have you ever felt that kind of hope? When? What happened?
 - b. Samantha said, "Hope does not always make sense." She explained that the moment she walked into our church building she just "knew in that moment something I could not have known at that point," i.e., that this was the place she was supposed to be as she prepared to become a pastor. If hope doesn't always make sense, how do we know the difference between wishful thinking and godly hope?
3. Rev. Allan Boesak was a renowned anti-apartheid activist in South Africa who was put in prison for his faith and activism. Now, years later, he teaches at Samantha's seminary – Christian Theological Seminary. Boesak says:

"Hope challenges earthly powers and principalities, and she places earthly powers under the critique of heaven and earth, by which I mean the critique of the outraged God, the suffering people, and the ravaged earth. Her birthplace is not in the palaces of the privileged, nor the high-steepled, stained-glass-windowed sanctuaries of power and customized religiosity. Rather, her birthplace is under the bush in the wilderness, where Ishmael lies dying; under the broom tree, where Elijah wishes for death; in the flames of yet another bush, from which Yahweh speaks hope and life and liberation to Moses and his people with words of inextinguishable fire. Hope's birthplace is on that cross on the hill, where the cry, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" is her form and shape. That is where Hope is born. When Hope speaks, she speaks not with the arrogance of certitude but with the eloquence of faith. She speaks with the voice of those whose voice is lost in the thunder of propaganda, those who have no voice because they are simply too tired, too lost, too weak, or too powerless to speak. Too unimpressive to be worth listening to, not hopeful of being heard, they are too discouraged to speak. [Hope] speaks for those whom the powerful have deprived the right to speak."

- a. What part of Boesak's statement most speaks to you?

- b. One of Boesak's points is that hope is not born in places of power and plenty. By definition, hope is born out of despair. What do you think that means? Do you agree? What are the implications of this principle for our own lives?
 - c. Name a place in your life right now where you are tempted to feel despair. Do you believe it's possible that the seed of hope is lying fallow there just waiting to be given life? If so, frame a simple sentence that is a statement of hope about your situation of despair and say it aloud to us, as your faith statement.
4. Read Romans 5:1-11. In particular, note verses 3 through 5, where Paul makes the same basic point as Boesak. Paul says that if we respond to suffering with character and endurance, it gives rise to hope. And, as verse 5 says, "Hope does not disappoint us!" In other words, there is great power in hope, or as Samantha put it, "Out of hope something truly miraculous can be born." Samantha gave us the example of Rev. Troy Perry daring to start a denomination of churches that would welcome queer people way back in 1968 when that was forbidden. And the example of Dr. Mordecai Ham, who followed his call to become a simple traveling evangelist. At one of his tent revivals, Billy Graham was converted and became one of history's greatest preachers. The point being: Out of hope something truly miraculous can be born.
- a. As you've read history and as you've watched the lives of others around you, when have you seen crazy hope giving rise to something truly miraculous?
 - b. As we look around us in the world, we see a lot of bad. It's easy to get discouraged. If we have enough hope, Samantha said, "We can have a revival of the nations." Revival is kind of an old fashioned word we don't hear much anymore. What does the word "revival" mean to you? In your view, what would a "revival of the nations" look like?"
 - c. Samantha showed a video of children from many different backgrounds and countries who spent a month together bonding at youth camp in Brazil. Here are some of the things they wrote to their parents:

"Before I left I was terrified of being away from home for a full month. . . . At the beginning, I felt a bit insecure and nervous about not being able to make friends. . . . It has been scary that people [are] so much more different than I'm used to. . . . After getting to know them and their thoughts, I see that we are more alike than I could have ever imagined. . . . Here we all get along. . . . By the time I'm your age, the world will change for the better. . . . You can become friends with anyone. . . . I really think that there's hope for the future."

Do you think that kind of world is possible? What do you need to do to help make it possible?

- d. Samantha suggested that before we can live lives of abundant hope, we have to be able to truly feel loved by Jesus Christ in our hearts. Romans 5:5 seems to make the same point: “Hope does not disappoint us because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” Do you feel deeply loved by Jesus? If so, what does that feel like? How can someone who doesn’t feel that love get there?