

Where Does Our Hope Come From?

Sermon by Reverend Rebecca M. Bryan

March 16, 2025

My hope comes from experience.

Words are hollow and lack depth when they are not backed up by personal and collective action.

I know that lives can be transformed and that situations can be overcome.

I know that no situation or other person has the right to define us or to own our destiny.

I know that love can overcome evil, hatred, and the effects of violence on a personal level. Therefore, I have every reason to believe that love can overcome evil, hatred, and the effects of violence on a collective level as well.

However, that kind of transformation requires commitment, love, and action. Evil is not overcome by happenstance.

We have to know and be true to ourselves, in order to make the kind of commitment necessary to allow love and conviction to fuel our bravery, which empowers us to take actions guided by love. Those actions, as expressions of our commitments, give us hope regardless of their outcome. We are not allowing circumstances to completely control us.

We need to trust ourselves, in addition to knowing ourselves. There is never a guru who knows better than you what you need to listen to and do. No one knows who you are better than you know yourself.

We also create hope when we do things together as well as alone. Listening alone in the big ocean is daunting, and finding your way when the woods are on fire is scary. We can all be supporters of others who are also finding their way.

Leaning into community when it is unfamiliar can be scary. Everyone won't be perfect, and neither will you. That's okay news. Individuals are stretched to be their best selves in community. We learn to care for one another in community, and to be cared for.

We rotate roles here. For a time, people are leaders and then they are followers. We are

all teachers, and we all learn. No one of us is above anyone else. Every one of us has taken our turn being lost and being found. Here and in authentic community, each person is encouraged to find his/her/their voice and use it. We will all be mad at times and we will all be sad. We will also feel grateful, loved, and loving. We will be encouraged, and we will be challenged.

Yet we all hold true to the values of our faith: the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the inescapable truth of the interconnectedness of everything, and owning our sacred responsibility to work to defend against all forces that seek to undermine democracy, human rights, and climate justice.

We are the ones we have been waiting for, my friends. It is our essential calling as liberal religious people to stand up and fight for what we believe in and know to be true.

When I say fight, I do not mean returning evil for evil or returning malice with more hatred. I mean taking action. When I say fight, I mean standing in front of the billionaires trying to run the world and ruin our country and saying, "not on my dime." "Not on her life, or his, or theirs."

Not in our country, nor in our town. Not on our streets and not in our pews or on our grounds.

We must do our best not to let our anger at everything wrong that is happening morph into blaming one another.

However each of us is called to show up—whether we resist by continuing to carry on our ordinary tasks with joy and love while working to change what is happening, or we resist with our feet or canes or wheel chairs on the pavement—we are love seeking expression through justice. Whether we are vulnerable and need to be sheltered. Whether we are making love not war.

Whether you are the one who sees the beauty in the sunset over the beach and takes photos to share with the world, or you are the one who watches the news and fills in the rest of us with the details we cannot bear to watch time and time

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again. Whether you are writing postcards, making phone calls, or going to protest in Boston, you are changing the world with your love.

Do not look for ultimate outcomes my friends.
They want us to do that.

Look for the good enough and celebrate that.

It's good enough that I did what I could, and I also spaced out watching a documentary.

It's good enough that I like a good mystery and time with a friend.

It's good enough that I made a mistake in my work for justice and even better that I can make amends and carry on.

My hope comes not in perfection but in doing all that we can with whatever vigor we have and thanking others who are doing the same.

My hope comes from actions, resistance, and transformation of all that tries to extinguish the light of justice, the power of truth, and the worth and dignity of all that is worth saving, which is everything.

May we act with courage. Come as we are,
journey together in love, and change the world.

Or at least die knowing we tried.

I believe in love.

I believe in transformation.

I believe that hatred does not have the final word
and is not the deciding factor.

I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people. I believe in the power of the collective,
the gifts that come out of our diversity.

I believe in thoughts, actions, and deeds
grounded by conviction and led by love.

Be the transformation.

Never give up the fight.

And return again in great joy.

Amen.