



# LESSONS IN LIVING

## “Hope In the Unseen”

A St. Andrew's Sermon  
Delivered by Rev. Babs Miller  
April 7, 2024

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 8:17-25 (*The Inclusive Bible*)

*And if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing in Christ's suffering and sharing in Christ's glory. Indeed, I consider the sufferings of the present to be nothing compared with the glory that will be revealed in us. All creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the children of God. Creation was subjected to transience and futility, not of its own accord, but because of the One who subjected it—in the hope that creation itself would be freed from its slavery to corruption and would come to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that from the beginning until now, all of creation has been groaning in one great act of giving birth. And not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit—we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free. In hope we were saved. But hope is not hope if its object is seen; why does one hope for what one sees? And hoping for what we cannot see means awaiting it with patient endurance.*

**Psalms 8:6-8 (*Inclusive Bible*)**

*You have made us barely less than God, and crowned us with glory and honor. You have made us responsible for the works of your hands, putting all things at our feet—all sheep and oxen, yes, even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea and whatever swims the paths of the seas.*

## Sermon

The Book of Romans is a very interesting book in the Bible. Some scholars even go so far as to elevate it to such a very special category that they even want to call it the most important book in all of the Bible. I would not go that far but Romans does have some memorable passages to many Christians and even non-Christians alike. One of my favorites was the one I encountered as a high school senior from Grace Presbyterian Church in Victoria, Texas. The congregation gave us all Bibles in 1961 and lifted up Romans 12:1-2 in particular to us. This passage reads:

*“Sisters and brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God- this is your spiritual act of worship. Don’t conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds, so you can judge what God’s will is-what is good, pleasing, and perfect.”*

This passage has informed my life ever since. I think it even adds to our scriptures read today. I continue to find great challenges for my life from these words.

When in seminary and probably even before that time, Roman’s 8:35-39 has also had a powerful influence on my life. Probably the most famous part of this passage is the last two verses which in a most dramatic way tells us that nothing can ever separate us from Love.

*“For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, neither heights nor depths - nor anything else in all creation-will be able to separate us from the love of God...”*

It was a particularly important passage for me to remember in seminary when I finally figured out that I was a lesbian, in the midst of my very homophobic classmates. In the blink of an eye, I went from being a campus leader to someone people did not want to be seen with or associated with. My classmates quit speaking to me, and some even got mad when I passed my ordination exams on first try during my senior year. And the Church at large had closed it’s doors to anyone like me, too. Thankfully St. Andrew’s did not!

There are many other memorable passages in Romans, but our passage today is memorable to me, in part, because of some changes in the translation that were made starting as early as the 1300’s to a particular word from the Greek into English. The Greek word κτίσεως (ktiseos) ( or however it is pronounced) means ‘creation.’ Starting as early as the first translations of the Bible into English, this word was translated as ‘creature,’ not ‘creation.’ This mistranslation can still be found today in even some of the newest translations of the King James Version done in 2021.

Why is this significant to me, you ask? Well, it’s because suddenly we are not given glory (which can mean power) over all of creation but rather just a creature (or pet) we want to care about. Big difference! The word ‘creature’ can easily be understood as representing one creature or one species that I want to save at the same time that I am destroying the whole rest of the planet’s creatures, minerals, people, plants and organisms. Now I no longer have to hold my feet to the fire over climate change, I just need to take good care of my goldfish or pet rock!

Now about the word ‘glory’ being given the translation of power by many Biblical scholars. It is generally felt that Paul frequently uses the Hebrew meaning of glory which in this case can be translated as power. Paul has heard the very clear message in Jesus’ teachings that humans are to have dominion or glory over all else. This concept traces all the way back to Genesis where God or Spirit gave humans the power or dominion over all else. They were to lovingly care for, not use and abuse everything all around them. This included all the people, plants, animals, minerals, the air we breathe, the water we drink, even every tiniest organism- everything that there was then and is here today.

The word ‘creation’ can have a very broad meaning. Obviously, it comes from the root word to create, and we have managed to create many things that do not align with the message found in this passage. Our passage suggests that we have the glory or power to bring about all the needed

changes to remove all the programs and policies that negatively impact any of our fellow human family members as well as the power to save our very planet. That's a lot of power and a lot of responsibility. Turning the word 'creation' into 'creature' is like sticking a pin in a giant balloon. It takes all the energy, the responsibility, and the love out of this whole message.

If we still have any doubts after all Paul has tried to tell us, we only need to look at our other passage from the Psalms. I think this Psalms is extremely clear about what glory means as well as what our jobs should be. Just listen to our psalmist again:

*“You (meaning that creative Spirit behind all this) have made us responsible for the works of your hands, putting all things at our feet- all sheep and oxen, yes, even the beasts of the field, all birds of the air, the fish of the sea and whatever swims the paths of the seas.”*

With all this being so clearly said, why are we so reluctant to step into our rightful place to save our planet in its' entirety? Again I say, this would include all the peoples, the other creatures large and small along with the very earth itself that we should be working to save. Clearly this job includes more than just caring for our planet. Renowned climate scientist Kathrine Hayhoe has put it perhaps more bluntly when she said, *“What is climate change but a failure to love”*. If we love our planet, if we love our one human family, then we must show our love by the care we give to every aspect of this equation.

Many folks are well aware of the damage we continue to do to our planet in the name of progress and wealth. But we have rarely come up with solutions that everyone can join in. Electric cars are an option for those who share in the privilege of economic advantages, but our economically imprisoned family members are stuck in the areas of our communities with the poorest mass transit opportunities, the oldest gasoline driven cars, the poorest air quality, and they generally have the longest distance to travel for work, food supplies and health care needs. They also deal daily with many laws and policies that keep them trapped in that economic condition.

Then there is all the whole spectrum of other issues which may not seem to some to directly relate to care for the planet, but clearly falls under the purview of this passage. These can be found in the category of care for all people. Because we are people of privilege, it becomes our responsibility to look after those who are without privilege. Women have long been imprisoned by patriarchal laws and concepts that severely limits their ability to have say over their own bodies. It even affects their ability to become all they may have been created to be. Meanwhile their male counterparts have total rule over their own bodies and their own destinies.

LGBTQIA+ individuals are still subjects of hate crimes, unfounded negative stereotypes, and discrimination. Sex trafficking can be found throughout our land. Our Transgender friends live in fear for their very lives due to unfair and clearly unconstitutional laws that seek to eliminate their very existence. If this elimination is accomplished, the list will continue and will slowly include everyone that is not white, male, and Christian, to either be eliminated or placed under the dominion of the ruling white Christians males. And the definition of what is Christian is very narrow, and I believe probably does not include anyone hearing these words today.

Now I am not speaking of all white males who might identify as Christian either. There are many who are actively trying to counter this movement towards white male supremacy along with the rest of us. And countering it is not limited to being a Christian thing to do. It's not a male or female thing to do. It's the human thing to do. It's the right thing to do! It's because we are all interconnected that we must ensure that freedom for one is freedom for all. Privilege for one becomes a given for all. There are no stepchildren in our one human family!

All this brings us to one of my favorite parts of this passage, because it's about hope. I like to borrow from 1 Corinthians 13 and paraphrase part of it to say "*without hope I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal*". To me that is what many of our politicians have become. They have lost their moral compass, which means they have lost hope and have become noisy gongs and clanging cymbals. All bitterness and no hope.

Hope is an action word, but it is an action word that involves patience. We all are called to continue to stand up for what we know is morally right and loving, no matter how long it takes. We must continue to have hope for all our human family and the planet we all live on. For when hope dies, we wither and die, too. So, we must keep hope alive, and it is easiest to do in community rather than in isolation. I suspect Covid may have done a number on our level of hope in some ways. But today we are back in community and back in the opportunity for greater hope. We must share this hope with everyone. Getting out and voting, encouraging others to vote, working to help candidates we like get elected, maybe even considering ways we might get into the political arena ourselves - these are all hopeful things we can engage in. Because this is an election year, voting just might be the best way to give voice to some of our present day hopes in the unseen.

March 31<sup>st</sup> was declared "Cesar Chavez Day" by then President Barack Obama. I can't think of a better model for hope in the unseen than the movement he and Delores Huerta started. Many movements since that time have echoed the well-known call "Si, se puede! Yes we can!" When it comes to climate change issues and all the inequalities that exist in our one human family that must be corrected, I think we need to borrow that cry once again.

Si, se puede! Yes we can !". Si, se puede! Si, se puede! Si, se puede!



### **The Growing Edge**

Look well to the growing edge. All around us worlds are dying and new worlds are being born; all around us life is dying and life is being bore. The fruits ripens on the tree, the roots are silently at work in the darkness of the earth against a time when there shall be new leaves, fresh blossoms, green fruit. Such is the growing edge! It is the extra breath from the exhausted lung, the one more thing to try when all else has failed, the upward reach of life when weariness closes in upon all endeavor. This is the basis of hope in moments of despair, the incentive to carry on when times are out of joint and People have lost their reason, the source of confidence when worlds crash and dreams whiten into ash. The birth of the child- life's most dramatic answer to death- this is the growing edge incarnate. Look well to the growing edge!

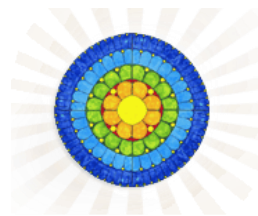
Howard Thurman "*Meditations of the Heart*" 134

### **Benediction**

Rev. Erica Knisely

There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God in Christ. No corrupt politician, no powers bent on hatred, no broken system, not height, nor depth, nor anything else in the entire world. So go out, with this unbreakable love, to love the whole world with light and peace. Si, se puede! **Si, se puede! SI SE PUEDE!!**

*Transcribed and edited by a member of the St. Andrew's Sermon Transcription Project.*



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