

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Endurance as the Path of Hope" 2/22/23

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

(Romans 15:4)

Ash Wednesday, the day set aside in the church calendar for us to remember: "From dust we came and to dust we will return". Humbling. We are dust, but we have worth, we are worth the life of Christ. We are sinners, and Christ came to set us free. In the dark of the night, we go to beg for and to receive forgiveness and acceptance from the King of Kings. We reflect on our lives. In the hymn, *Bless Now, O God, the Journey*, we hear:

"Bless sojourners and pilgrims who share this winding way;
Your hope burns through the terrors, Your love sustains the day.
We yearn for holy freedom while often we are bound;
together we are seeking the road where faith is found."

We are reminded life is a journey. During Lent the journey wanders through the wilderness. Here we find ourselves alone in the unknown. We remember Jesus also journeyed in the wilderness. David walked the dark valley. The Children of Israel traversed the wilderness. But because God never sends us to a place or allows us to begin any journey without giving us instruction, we can have hope through endurance. Scripture is given to us so hope abounds while we wander.

Here we look at what we need to pack for the journey and at what we can – or should – unpack, so the journey will be successful.

Here we are tempted, tried, strengthened, and formed into the people God created us to be. We realize what we can, with God's help, accomplish. God's Spirit brings us to the realization of how we were created, with what we are gifted, how we are able to stand up to challenges. We realize we need each other; we are called to uplift and support one another for the work of God. We find we are not alone, and nothing can hinder us from our goal of loving God and one another. We are able to reflect God's love through the struggles we endure, as well as what we skate through. In the wilderness the Spirit creates hope within us. And our hope burns through the terrors we face in life.

Let us have hope as we begin our journey through this wilderness which will lead us to Easter morning. As we set off, let us retrace the baptismal cross on our foreheads, remembering we abound in hope and God's love and forgiveness washes over our guilt and our shame and sets us free.

Please pray with me:

Lord of the Journey, thank You for giving to us hope so we may endure the journey through the wilderness. Help us to lay down those things in our lives which are unneeded baggage and to pick up new ways to serve You and love others. Your presence and Your love strengthen us to seek the path where faith is found.

Amen