

# A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

## "High Hopes" 4/27/22

*Count it all joy, my friends, when you meet trials of various kinds,  
for you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.  
And let steadfastness have its full effect, so you may be perfect  
and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)*

Life is not easy. Not in Ukraine, not in Russia, not in Jamaica, not in Great Britain, not in Europe, Asia, Africa, not in South or - North America. Not at home, at school, at work, or at the church.

I didn't attend church as a youth. But I read the Bible. I believed in God. I believed in Jesus. He was born on Christmas and died and was raised on Easter. I had an okay life, like most kids I figured everybody lived the same way I did, had the same life.

I knew bad things happened, and this verse from James was what I held on to. My tough times – granted they weren't at that point real tough – were to be met with joy, they were making me a better person. Marcus Aurelius, a Roman emperor and stoic, put it this way, "The Obstacle is the Way." Turning trials into triumphs. Making it over the hurdle, through the storm. Being able to continue. Becoming steadfast, faithful, not lying down and giving up.

Life is not fair – no one ever said it would be. Bad things happen. Unexplainable events blindsides us. Someone makes an unreasonable request of us. We stumble, we fall. But we also skip and dance. We also receive unexpected blessings and walk in joy. We are made stronger by difficulties. We feel good when we endure a hard day, when we realize we faced a difficult choice – but we made the right decision. When after all the blood, sweat and tears, we are proud of how the project turned out. When as much as we didn't ever want to endure it or think it would happen to us – we know we were made stronger and grew from the ordeal.

Shakespeare put it this way, "Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt." (*Measure for Measure*)

When things aren't going well, or according to our plan, if we are going to survive, we must not quit, but give it another go. Keep trying. Make a new plan – or maybe ask God about His plan.

During their time in exile – talk about a rough situation – God's prophet, Jeremiah, comforts and encourages God's people with these words, "I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jer 29:11)

Be encouraged. Face the new task, take the bull by the horns. Allow yourself to be formed into a better person by the obstacles which rub you the wrong way. Let them smooth out rough edges and make you shine. Let the difficulties we each face, make us the best people we can be. People who, in a world where we can be anything we want, we want to be kind. We want to love others, even the unlovable. We accept another's points of view. We go forward into the storm, even though a part of us would rather put into port.

Don't let our own doubts, the put downs of others, the missteps, the unfairness stop us from trying or hinder us from accomplishing our dreams.

Next time you're found,  
with your chin on the ground  
There a lot to be learned, so look around

Just what makes that little old ant  
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant  
Anyone knows an ant, can't  
Move a rubber tree plant

But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes  
He's got high apple pie, in the sky hopes

So, hold on to your high hopes – oops - there goes another rubber tree plant.

### ***Please pray with me.***

God of high hopes, thank you for encouraging us when we wander in the wilderness. For strengthening us in adversity. For walking with us in the desert. For bringing us comfort when we are down. For those You bring into our lives to lift us up. Help us to hold on to our faith, to live into Your plan for our lives, to face each new day, each new adventure with high hopes. **Amen.**