



Poland Presbyterian Church

At the Green since 1802

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November 23, 2014
Christ the King

Ephesians 1:15-23

The Rev. Robbin Del Nagro

“The Hope that is In Us”

http://www.metacafe.com/watch/an_kaenJY7JhbJmm/schindlers_list_1993_water_on_the_trains/

For those of you that do not or cannot access the link above, I will describe the scene for you. It is a clip from the movie, “Schindler's List”. Shindler arrives at the train station on a hot summer day while Nazi soldiers sit around “guarding” a loaded train of Jews bound for concentration camps. Shindler is easy to recognize, dressed all in white, even his hat, while the soldiers are in uniform. Shindler sits with the soldiers and they exchange laughter. It is getting hotter and they offer Oscar Shindler a cold drink. As he enjoys this and as he fans himself with his hat, he is aware of the suffering of those inside the train cars, packed tightly together with only a small, high window for air.

Shindler is thinking and he casually suggests that they take the fire hose and hose down the train. One of the soldiers chides him, “Where is the fire?” They all laugh, but Shindler continues, “Indulge me.” The next scene switches to Shindler and a soldier, hose in hand, spraying water on the train cars. As they move down the line of cars, Shindler directs the hands of the soldier to spray water into the small windows so that those inside can have a drink of cold water. You see the people stretching to drink what drops they can, their mouths wide open.

The hose has not reached to the last cars so Shindler suggests that he can go home and return with more hose. All the while the Nazi soldiers are watching him with laughter and contempt. One of them calls out, “You're being cruel, Oscar. You are giving them hope. That's cruel.” Still Shindler reaches the last cars and when he is finished he supplies bottles of water and instructions to the guards on the train to hand out water whenever the train stops.

“You give them hope,” the Nazi soldiers say to Shindler. “It is cruel to give them hope.” Is it cruel to hope when the signs around us seem to say that we are living in the midst of hopelessness? When we look at the world around us at the injustice and the inhumanity of person against person it is easy to despair of hope. Consider these grim facts. A child dies of hunger every ten seconds. On a single night over 600,000 persons

in the United States are without a roof over their head. Over 30 persons die from gun violence every day in the US. 4-7 children die each day from abuse and there are between 600,000 and 800,000 victims of human trafficking worldwide today. Americans are afraid to send their children to school or to shop at the local mall or even go to a movie theatre because all of these everyday places have been the setting for mass shootings in recent times. We are told that the polar ice cap is melting, the ocean waters are rising, and weather patterns are changing so rapidly that there is little we can do to stop global warming. We are still fighting the war on cancer, the war on drugs, and the war on ebola while across the globe millions die in violent wars every day from our inability to get along with one another. Where, indeed, do we find any signs of hope?

In one of my preaching classes in seminary our first assignment was to give an impromptu sermon to the class telling each other about the “hope that is in us.” Paul tells us to always be ready to make an accounting for the hope that is in us. How many of us can actually do that? How many of us can actually put our hands around the hope that is in us and speak out in defense of that hope?

Is there a power that rises above the unjust powers and authorities of this world? Is there truly a king who brings us hope in the midst of flood and tornado and hurricane and tsunami? Is there any king who will come to us in our despair and restore to us all that has been lost.? Is there any chance that all of our distorted humanity that pits person against person and exploits others for personal gain, and turns its eyes away from the hurting can ever be restored to humanity that has compassion for others?

Jesus tells us that our humanity is restored in the smallest acts of love for one another. Why would Shindler give the masses of Jews on those trains a cold drink of water? Why would one man reach out and try to offer hope? Was it cruel to give hope to the hopeless? After all, these Jews were bound for certain death in the concentration camps. Even when we have nothing to look toward but death, does a small gesture to relieve the suffering of another show us that indeed there is a power greater than even death? If Christ is truly King then we are given a new vision for humanity, a vision of wholeness and abundance. In this vision the hungry are fed, the homeless housed, the naked clothed, the prisoners visited, the strangers welcomed.

We should be down upon our knees today, as our church year draws to a close and the day we set aside to give thanks to God draws near. We should be down on our knees in gratitude for the hope that Christ crowned King of King and Lord of Lords has given us. We should be thanking our Lord for restoring to us all that we, in our human weakness, have squandered and destroyed. The signs around us may tell us not to be thankful, not to trust goodness, not to believe that we can ever be any more than people who fall short of the glory of God. But Christ the King tells us that this is not so, and if we believe that the despair around us is the last word, we deceive ourselves.

In the Orkney Islands off the shore of Northeast Scotland there is a barren island called Lamb Holm. It was here that Italian prisoners of WWII were kept. But on that island there is one small structure. It is a tiny chapel. These men built it with their own hands out of anything they could find. Why would they make the effort to build a church

when they didn't know if they would ever return to their homeland or even leave this island alive? This tiny church was a sign of hope, a sign of Christ the King whose power raised these men above the circumstances of war and isolation.

Christ the King is not only King of the Christians, Christ the King is King of the non-believers and the Jews and the Hindus and the Muslims and people of every religion and race and nationality. Christ the King is King of Humanity who brings all human beings the message that love wins out over hatred, that small acts of kindness restore us to the beings we were created to be. There are small signs of hope all around us if we just look.

Dan is a man who brings coffee every Wednesday and Thursday for every member of the staff at the cancer center which treated his father.



This man gives his shoes to a homeless girl in Rio de Janeiro.



A child shares the best news in the world.



Marine Myles Kerr finishes a race last to help a young boy who got separated from his group.



This injured girl is carried around bases by the OPPOSING team so she could score.



A kind child helps a homeless man by giving him something to eat on a cold day.



These people shared electricity after hurricane Sandy.



This woman kept a homeless man dry during a downpour.



This man became a seat for an elderly woman while stuck in an elevator.



A Good Samaritan! The friend you don't know.

The Bad News

You left your car
unlocked, and your lights
ON

The Good News

You left your car unlocked
so I turned off your lights

∩
∪

Your Friend
you don't know

An Afghan man offers tea to a US soldier.



These are all small signs of hope in our world. They are small acts of compassion that restore faith in our humanity. If for every act of evil we could do just one act of good we would be living into the reign of God in Jesus Christ who told us that when we relieve the suffering of the least of these, we do it as if that person were Christ himself.