

# The Pastor's Report

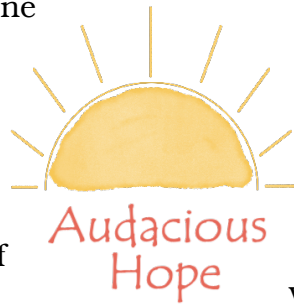
Greetings my friends (and I call you my friends because everything that I learned about God I have made known to you),

When I first started to consider a topic for the Pastor's Report for the summer newsletter (yes, after 27 years it finally dawned on us we could combine June with the July/August Newsletter to arrive at a "Summer Newsletter" pretty clever, huh?!?) I was leaning toward the idea of stopping to appreciate the time in one's life. This may be appreciating one's childhood, or parenthood, or level of professional attainment, or one's headspace or heartsease. You name it, stop and joy it. Life is what is already happening when you are making other plans.

This notion of stopping to reflect and appreciate one's place *in* life, and take *on* life was usurped by what feels to me like a weightier consideration: having an *audacious* hope. To begin, I did what I always do, and what every preacher worth their salt should do. I examined what scripture has to say about "hope." When I did a word search for "hope" what I discovered is the tacit assumption that hope was relegated to the region of life which is the bottom of the barrel. That is, the hope to be extricated from one's pain, misery, woe, oppression, and the like. In fact, there was no scriptural reference to the hope one might have, or be able to have, when sitting *atop* the barrel rather than in the sludge on the bottom of said (to push the analogy).

This got me thinking. Is hope always relegated to the bottom-end of the life spectrum in what might be called the "dire circumstances" range? Or, said another way, is hope only that which aspires to simply see oneself move from bad to (marginally) ok? Or, is there a kind of hope which

aspires to move one from pretty good (actually) to (holy cow) great? At first glance we imagine this to be the case, however we must be careful not to confuse "top end of the spectrum" kind of hope with greed, or ambition, or simply the constant pursuit of more and more. Bit of a head scratcher, that?



As you might suspect, this got me thinking a great deal about myself and what it is that I find myself hoping for at this time in my own life? The first question I found myself asking was this: "Is what I am hoping for big enough so as to be worth my effort in hoping for it? That is, is my hope audacious enough to be worthy of the energy I am expending in hoping?"

I am not sure I have come up with an answer to that question just yet. However, I *have* managed to identify things that are masquerading as "audaciously hope-worthy" while in truth they are anything but. They simply are not worth the time and energy to be carrying that particular hope within me. A simpler way to express this might be to say let us not settle for hoping for less. Instead, let us be AUDACIOUS in hoping for as much as our hearts can hold.

Of course, one of the places in life we do see such an audacious hope is with one's children (and grandchildren). Having hope for those we love, however, is always far easier than the hope we hold for ourselves. If you have a fast second this summer, maybe take a few minutes to think about that for which you hope, and that for which we are hoping for our church. Both in the days to come, and in the years to follow.

I wish you well in your hoping,  
Rev. Mike

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." - Ephesians 3:20