

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

As we begin the new year of 2012, we are hopeful for what God will bring for our future and at the same time we are fearful for what will happen throughout this year; Hope and Fear come along together in our daily life. The key word today is “uncertain” or “unpredictable.” Can you predict who will be elected as the next president? Can you predict what the stock market will go? Can you predict what weather would be during this winter? So many unpredictable things happen around our lives. Let’s go back to basics of our spiritual life: Hope, Faith, and Love.

Let me ask you a few questions and hope you would answer: What makes you worry this year – your needs, stresses, and concerns? What do you hope for this year at your personal life or home? What do you pray for God to answer your prayers?

One day Jesus and his disciples got in a boat. “Let’s cross the lake – the sea of Galilee,” he said. And off they went. It was smooth sailing until a terrific storm came up suddenly on the lake. In the meantime, Jesus was sleeping. When facing the fierce storm, they were so terrified. They woke Jesus and then Jesus commanded to the wind, “Silence!” and the waves, “Quiet down!” They did it. The lake became smooth as glass. Then Jesus said to his disciples, **“Why can’t you trust me?”** (The *Message Bible*)

We -each and every one of us - is sailing the lake of life in this new year. As Jesus says, “Let’s cross the lake,” we are crossing the lake of life day by day toward the destination defined by the Lord; we are going though with Jesus; we believe that Jesus is with us. Life is not always smooth; nobody can be sure what will come next. All of sudden when we meet a storm happening in our lives, fear strikes us so we are worried. It is normal and natural human response! Nevertheless, we need to find where our faith is; with whom are we sailing the boat of our lives – your personal life boat, your family boat, or our church boat. What did Jesus say to his disciples after calming the wind and the waves? **“Where is your faith?” “Why can’t you trust me?”** This question asks of each of us the fundamental relationship with Jesus, which is the question of faith. What is your trusting level of Jesus? How much do you trust Jesus in your midst of worry, fear, or problems? (Do you hear Jesus say to you?)

The Book of Hebrews defines faith such as: **“The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It’s our handle on what we can’t see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd”** (Hebrews 11:1-2).

Faith is the trust in God through believing in Jesus Christ, who is the shield of our lives; it is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living; Faith is the enabling force sustaining our lives as well as enabling strength for us to go forward regardless of any

trial or problems you and I face. “And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

A parable is told of a farmer who owned an old mule. The mule fell into the farmer’s well. The farmer heard the mule braying, or whatever mules do when they fall into wells. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbors together and told them what had happened. He enlisted them to haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery. Initially, the old mule was hysterical. But as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling the dirt on his back a thought dawned on him – every time a shovelful of dirt landed on his back he should shake it off and step up. This he did, blow after blow. He kept saying to himself, *shake it off and step up...shake it off and step up...shake it off and step up!*

No matter how painful the blows. No matter how distressing the situation. The old mule fought panic, fear, and self-pity. He just kept shaking it off and stepping up. Yup. It wasn’t long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well. What may have buried him, actually blessed him. Why? Because of the way he handled adversity. Perhaps the challenges and adversities we face also have the potential of benefit and blessing. The outcome depends on the way we respond to our problems. Kites fly highest when facing into a big wind. We can learn from an old mule the next time we have a hydrant day...shake it off and step up!

Facing difficult circumstances can be rough – but knowing that God has provided a solution for every problem is reassuring. Check out His Word –the answers are all there.

Someone says that “faith is not the absence of fear, but it is going through in the midst of fear.”

Psalm 121, the title of assurance of God’s protection, says:
I lift up my eyes to the hills- from where will my help come?
My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

Let’s stick with God’s Word and let God’s promise lead your life throughout this new year: *Shake it off and step up by faith! Amen.*

“Nobody cares if you can’t dance well, just get up and dance again. Get in the race and, for goodness sake, gaze forward. And just like Jesus, never mention or be limited by your past again. You can do it. God knows it!”

“Gaze ahead! Accept that some days you’re the pigeon, and some days you’re the statue.”

**Steadfast God,
you have enriched and enlightened us
by the revelation of your eternal Christ.
Comfort us in our mortality
and strengthen us
to walk the path of your desire,
so that by word and deed we may manifest
the gracious news of your faithfulness and love. Amen**