

Reclaiming Our Power
9.11.11
Daniel J. Krewson

Each of us has a 9.11 story.

Where we were when we first heard
What our reaction was when we realized what was going on
How we felt as the day unfolded
The memories...the emotion...the weight of it all

& then finally gathering to pray that evening in this place or one like it.

The events of September 11th, 2001 revealed the paradox of life – humanity at its very worst and very best in the same moments: the senseless destruction of innocent lives but also the selfless acts of courage in moments of need.

Henri Nouwen once wrote that “We will experience the minutes and hours of our lives differently when hope takes up residence.”

As we people of faith, we gather today to remember and mourn, but also to draw strength from God’s Word – from what we profess to be true – that Hope resides in us and in the world because of God’s might and mercy.

I was dumbfounded by the events of that day. And angered. And frightened. But mostly, deeply saddened. That the world is such a broken place.

And yet, in the midst of the sadness, there was not despair

For I read these words from Romans...

If God is for us – who can ever be against us?

and hearing those words delivers us from a life lived in fear

From a life lived in anger

From a life lived in despair

If God is for us – who can ever be against us?

I believe faith enables us in such moments to become

Better – not bitter

The Gospel text before us lifts up the importance of forgiveness...admittedly an odd topic to be considering today.

Miroslav Volf Christian author and professor at Yale Divinity School

native land Croatia; once asked could you embrace Serbian fighters who burned churches and raped and killed people in home land?

With honesty, he replied, “No, I can not embrace them, but, as a follower of Jesus Christ, I think I should be able to.”

Perhaps one insight into how to become better, instead of bitter
find reconciliation – and move forward amidst the pain.

This week I talked with a pastor also a karate instructor.

Over the years has worked with several social service agencies to provide special programs for women and children who have been in abusive relationships

He and a staff member would teach them basics of self defense, not necessarily for them to retaliate, but for them to begin process of what they called ‘reclaiming their power.’

[Professionals say] when hurt by another, life is complicated by the feeling that perpetrator taken their power away, whether it’s a lack of confidence or overwhelming and paralyzing feelings of fear. the victim often feels powerless. Their program was a multi-week session that - little by little helped them to reclaim their power, their sense that they can feel good about themselves and the world again.

Helps given them hope.

Remember what Henri Nouwen said?

We will experience minutes and hours of our lives differently when hope takes up residence.

Remember the signs of hope we experienced following Sept. 11th?

Thousands lined up to give blood

Many sign up to enlist for military service

People had a genuine desire to get to know their neighbors

Some commit to a day of service

Many donated in other ways

There was united sense of political will – unseen in recent times

Reclaiming our power – scripture would lead us to believe

has something to do with compassion, forgiveness, mercy

Bishop Mark Hanson reflected on living out forgiveness, tells of a time ordered a cab that was 25 minutes late when it arrived – when the driver showed up, he could sense the bishop’s impatience. the driver apologized citing road construction. the bishop humphed into the cab.

at air port, after having the cab ride to calm down, while unloading luggage, bishop said to the cab driver, Sir will you please forgive me for being so impatient when you were late? Cab driver quite surprised, yes of course I will.

And went on their ways. Or so bishop thought – wouldn't know, a week later when called for a cab ride back home, same driver showed up – this time – 10 minutes early. he pulled up to the curb announcing, I'm not late this time!

chance to talk learn life stories cab driver was from west Africa, Muslim, and finishing graduate studies in U.S., he plans to return work area conflict resolution. bishop was able to share his faith and experiences working toward mutual understanding

They both agreed that people of all faiths need to work together to build a world of peace.

A few weeks ago I went to an event Islamic Center CC
They invited the public to join them for the end of month of Ramadan for evening prayer and breaking of the fast.

As I entered, my first thought was, did I wear good socks today?

Tradition in their house of worship is to remove shoes

I didn't want to be walking around in holey socks – if you know what I mean! I do like the connection to Moses and God's command – remove your sandals, this is Holy ground...

I was moved by their piety, and even more by their hospitality.

Following evening prayer explained

Significance of their fast; to reconnect with the tenets of their faith

Then we shared a meal – wonderful food rich in flavor and plentiful in spices. While eating I met two gentlemen both originally from Pakistan, one a doctor another a computer programmer

We enjoyed our time eating and talking together.

It reminded of the small things we can do to build bridges with those around us.

We are in this together.

In a broader sense this is the message of Rally Day as well.

It is the first Sunday of the fall program year

Sunday school begins

Bible studies resume

Confirmation and youth programs lift off

We are rallying around God's promise...

a promise to forgive us & we in turn are to forgive one another...

For this fall, the pastors have created a renewal program to acknowledge
We are a faith community transformed by God's promise

God promises to renew you day by day

We believe that renewal is lived out in community here Family of God.

Yesterday former president Bush reminded the nation that those aboard flight 93 helped avert a greater disaster as they took their fates into their own hands. they saved others lives, because they chose to act...

This Rally Sunday, I urge you

Choose to act

Choose to be renewed this Fall

Choose to surround your self with fellow believers and connect on deeper level

Choose to commit to offering your worship and praise with unabashed enthusiasm

Choose to discover God as God is revealed in people who are different from yourself

Choose to follow Jesus, who said,

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

I agree with Henri Nouwen:

We will experience our minutes and hours differently when Hope takes up residence.

What, or better, WHO is residing with you?

And now to Him who is able to accomplish abundantly beyond all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory, now and forever. Amen.