

“It’s Going to be OK!” **WHO SAYS?**

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we conclude our sermon series: *“It’s going to be OK,”* I’ve added this question: **Who Says? WHO SAYS?** It’s an important caveat and question, because when you’re in the midst of tough, hard times it can be challenging to believe that everything is *“going to be OK.”* Sometimes, as a friend shared with me this past week, the best you can do is to *“hold your own and hold on!”*

Every one of us has faced personal loss and failure; sins and sorrows haven’t we? Sometimes it all feels so overwhelming, obstacles seemingly insurmountable; relationships torn apart; family, health, life, financial, school and work issues so perplexing, that no matter what a pastor or parent, friend or family member, confidant or counselor says, it’s hard to fathom how everything *“is going to be ok.”* When communities and people in our nation are devastated and traumatized by mass shootings, innocent lives lost by violence, anger and hatred, it’s hard to envision that everything is *“going to be OK.”* What do we say that can bring encouragement and strength, providing a glimmer of hope? *“It’s Going to be OK!”*
WHO SAYS?

Now there’s a lot of trite advice and well-intended direction out there for folks to latch on to; designed to lift one’s spirit and change one’s outlook. I found *“50 Reassuring Quotes”* on Google that *“Everything Is Going to Be Okay.”* (Mani,

Outofstress.com) Some of them, quite frankly are just philosophical, idealistic trash that ignores the reality of life in this sinful and broken world; others aren't bad; tidbits of awareness, meditation, mindfulness and wisdom that can make a momentary difference. For example:

- *“No matter what happens, or how bad it seems today, life does go on, and it will be better tomorrow.”* – Maya Angelou
- *“Some days there won't be a song in your heart. Sing anyway.”* – Emory Austin
- *“You don't always win, but every time you lose, you get better.”* – Ian Somerhalder
- *“You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to swim.”* – Jon Zinn
- *“Always remember: if you're going through hell, keep [on] going.”* – Winston Churchill

Of course, you already know where this sermon is going, because trusting and believing *“it will be OK”* is rooted and grounded in the everlasting promises of the living Word of our God - verified by the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, who has already been *“through hell”* – for us, defeating sin, Satan and death! He has already been *“not OK”* - for us, crying out on Calvary's Cross, bearing the burden of our sin, *“My God, why!”* He has already walked *“through the valley of the shadow of death”* - for us, raised on Easter morn to give everlasting life to all who believe, providing *“strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow!”* **IT'S GOING TO BE OK! Who says: GOD** – *“who”* as the Psalmist declares, *“is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”* (Psalm 46:1) Indeed, the Holy Spirit is working again today through Word and Sacrament inviting us

by grace through faith in Christ to trust and believe that ***it's going to be OK!*** **Who says: GOD!**

So how does one get to that place of hope and assurance in the midst of life when things are not OK? That's an important question as well, because as one Christian pastor and author writes: *"It's that spot that we all get stuck in if we live and love long enough; that suffocating, hopeless, heavy place called Not Okay.* I've been there, so have you! Some are there right now "and as much as we try to look away or run away or pray it away, it hits us anyway; cruel and relentless in its fury. Sometimes,"* as the author writes, *"it sneaks up on us; jumping out from behind the bushes, and in a vicious second, a phone call, an impact, a decision, [an illness, a death]—we're there! And the worst part about not being Okay is that once you are there, you lose your vision. You become profoundly nearsighted. You lose the ability to see any further than that horrible not-okayness in front of you; [unable] to believe that just beyond the fear and the sadness and the failure, there's another place. **

That's why Paul's Letter to the Colossians is so important in our spiritual journey, because this Word from God takes us deeper, or better yet, higher, as the Apostle writes: *"If then, you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."* (Colossians 3:1-2) There is no way we can embrace OK until we *"set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth,"* trusting and believing, as Paul writes, that *"Christ is all, and in all!"*

So when things are not OK, we have to engage the good fight of faith on the personal, spiritual battleground of our “minds” - **clinging** fiercely in faith to the promises of God’s Word; **claiming** the victory of Christ’s death and resurrection; **committed** to walking in a new way of life; **confident** that no matter what happens, there on the horizon is hope that triumphs and life that is eternal! That’s the spiritual focus and mindset that points us to Jesus, claiming and believing the promise that’s engraved on the cornerstone of this beautiful church: “*And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.* (Romans 5:1-5 RSV) **IT’S GOING TO BE OK! Who says: GOD does!**

This hope is expressed so poignantly by the Christian author and pastor I quoted earlier:

One day the tempest in your head will be stilled to quiet waters. You’ll breathe deeply and slowly again. Laughter will come easily. Peace will visit and linger. Joy will have a homecoming. You’ll hear words of truth spoken directly to your heart, telling you that life is indeed a good and worthwhile endeavor—and you’ll eat-up every delicious word.

*I know that from where you stand this may sound trivial, even insulting to your ears. It may seem like a cheap, hollow platitude right now, but it’s the truest truth I can give you to sustain you: It’s gonna be Okay. Really. I promise you. As dark as it seems, as difficult as it is, as much as it hurts—it’s gonna be Okay. Really!** **WHO SAYS? GOD!**

You see, my friends, this is not just some preacher's poetic language; it's not just a catchy sermon series theme - it's a promise from God, written in His Word, fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus for us to wrap our "minds" around, to "influence" our thoughts, words and deeds, inviting us by His grace to trust and believe! It's the language of faith that we get to "hold on to" when we're just barely "holding our own!" It's the Christian witness we are privileged to share with others, affirming God's loving, forgiving and sustaining presence, praying for them, reminding them and ourselves that Christ is "with us always" - and when we "set our minds" on Him "***it's gonna be Okay. Really!***" **WHO SAYS? GOD!**

AMEN!

- Rev. Preston E. Wagner, Pastor *Emeritus*
Hope Lutheran Church, Wake, Forest, NC

* Adapted from "I Just Want You To Know, It's Gonna Be Okay"
November 5, 2014 / john pavlovitz