



# Grand Chaplain's Corner

By RW Grand Chaplain Pat Thompson

August 15, 2022



*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1)*

“Hope is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops – at all – (Emily Dickinson)

What a lyrical description of *hope* from the pen of the poet! And while I admire the sentiment, my life experience has taught me a slightly different truth: *the things I hope for are a matter of faith in the goodness of God*. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews makes that very point.

If we can begin with the conviction that God is good and that God is sovereign (i.e., God will do what God will do), then everything else falls into place. I am not unaware of the struggle many folks endure when they just cannot seem to get to that point. Our task is to be there for them when the reality of life becomes too hard to bear. It is in such times that those who, for the moment, might have a little more faith, can share it with our brothers and sisters.

Someone has observed that the entire prayer process is an exercise in *hope*. We cannot see the future, but we can be confident that a beneficent God holds that future. When we pray, we recognize that what we need is beyond our grasp, and we rejoice that every need will be met. In a way, we are participating in the goodness of God each time we bow our heads in prayer. We have hope even when we cannot see the path in front of us.

The late Peter J. Gomes, who taught at the Harvard Divinity School and was the university minister there, reminds us that “Hope does not deny the circumstances of the present, and hope doesn’t help us get out of our difficulties. Hope doesn’t get us out, but it does get us through.” It points us to a greater truth that is beyond the present moment – a reality that is centered in the sovereign goodness of God. The poet recognized the delicate nature of hope when she described it as “the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.”

It has been said that we can never truly know God and that all we can know is what God does. Much of my own experience of God’s benevolence has become known only in retrospect. I will bet that is also your experience. We see the hand of the Supreme Architect as we look back at our lives. It was always there even though we could not see it.

Hope is the essence of our dependance on the Deity whose hand we cannot always see, but whose attention is never turned from the most minute detail of the unfolding of the fabulous universe in which we live.

Faithfully and fraternally,

*Pat*