



Home

by Rev. Jeannie Douglas

My home town has just disappeared off the map. It's still there, mind you: it just doesn't exist as I have known it all my life. My home town is Paradise, California. If you don't know the story, Paradise caught fire last week and the whole town was evacuated. Other little towns around the area were evacuated also and many, many people lost everything except their lives.

Being thankful for your life on a daily basis is one thing; being thankful after such a great loss is altogether another thing. On that dreadful day, so many people were running (some were literally running) for their lives. But in all that chaos, in all that fear, human nature took effect.

People helping people. It didn't matter who you were: young, old, male, female, straight, gay, abled body or differently abled. It didn't matter the color of your skin. All that mattered was saving lives. Even the firefighters stopped to save lives rather than put out the fires.

It makes me think about the human condition. What is it that we really want out of life? How do we want to be treated and how do we treat others? At the end of the road, what do we want our tombstone to say?

No one ever promised life was going to be easy. No one ever promised we weren't going to have losses. No one ever promised everyone was going to like who we are or what we have done in our lifetime. But we are resilient people. We pick ourselves up and we take another go at it. We learn from our past and we change our future.

That's what's so gratifying about being able to make choices. We can change our future. We can make new decisions, do things differently, see things differently and create new dreams.

Paradise may be gone. The fire may have wiped out many houses, but it didn't wipe out the homes, because houses can be rebuilt, but homes are anywhere we may be, even if it is sleeping in tents in a Walmart shopping lot. Who says you cannot begin again by charting out your next steps, with a piece of chalk on the black pavement of a parking lot?

Starting over only means new visions and new dreams. Dream those dreams and dream them big. You can always come back stronger.

