

The Eleventh Step: Commitment to Hope

While we are familiar with the virtues of faith and love, we often forget or neglect the virtue of hope. Like faith and love, faith is one of the three “theological virtues” that are essential to our life in Christ. Faith enables us to see what we cannot understand; love enables us to live like Christ; and hope sustains our faith and love. Hope enables us to make the journey that brings us to God.

Today many people live without hope and place their trust in fleeting realities. For example, they only hope for those things they can see and touch. They hope for a new car, a new house. Their hope is bounded and limited by this life. Other people have lost all hope. They look at the evil in the world, and they see no reason to hope that things will get better. They experience the death of a loved one, and they view death as the absolute end of life because they have no hope for resurrection life.

The distinguishing characteristic of those who believe in Christ, however, is hope. We hope in God’s promises. We hope for the appearance of the kingdom of God. We hope for the resurrection of the dead. We hope for eternal life.

But isn’t hoping wishful thinking? Will God truly fulfill the promises? Will there be a moment when the kingdom of God will rule over all history and creation? Will the resurrection of Christ overcome the power of death so that we can live in and with God forever?

Many many people would argue so. They would tell us to return to the real world of hard reality and accept what you can see and touch, what we can empirically prove. This is the whole meaning of life. There is nothing more.

Is this really true? Is what we experience today the whole meaning of life? Haven’t you ever had that fleeting sense there is something more? Have you ever had that intuition that there is more to what you see and hear? This is what artists and musicians are saying all the time by their works of art. There is something more. But what is it?

Jesus Christ tells us. Our lives are destined for God. As the great Saint Augustine once said, “our hearts are restless and they will not rest until they rest in you.” The object of our hope is God, life in God. And this life has been made available to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We believe that just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so God can raise us from the dead into a new life that we cannot even imagine.

When we live by hope everything changes. Our faith is on fire because we know that the final victory belongs to God. All things will be well. Live in hope—the hope God gives in Jesus Christ—and your outlook on life will change. Your faith will be on fire.