

CHRISTMAS 2022

Hope

A remembrance by Greg Smith

What is Hope? What does having Hope mean to you?

Does this season find you feeling a little less Hopeful, or worse still - Hopeless?

Isn't Hope what we all want or want more of? A greater confidence in the Hope we currently have or are holding onto?

If you have Hope, what is that Hope you have rooted in?

Yourself?

The Cosmos?

Or something more?

We all have Hope or have had Hope in ourselves, haven't we? We have all thought, "I can't count on anybody else, but I can count on me. I'll never let myself down."

I can only speak for myself. I was all in on "me", until I failed myself and the expectations I had envisioned. I found counting on myself wasn't my best option.

I turned to anything and everything, to seek out whatever I could from whomever I could to get me to the place I wanted to go. I searched out answers from everyone and every source that was passed along to me. I still didn't get to where I thought I needed and wanted to be.

Then, It arrived - that Moment.

That Moment... What Moment?

You know, that Moment every human being on the face of this earth experiences.

What am I speaking of?

That moment when our life or the life of someone we deeply care for, the someone who is the air that we breath, is faced with a seemingly Hopeless situation from a life altering diagnosis, a job loss, or any number of things that each of us have experienced.

It's that Moment when I was being steamrolled by this broken world. Lost and undone - not knowing which way to turn.

It's in that Moment that a phenomena occurred. For in that Moment, I didn't start looking for help from myself and others.

Oh, NO.

I began to cry out to God for help. And if you are honest with yourself, whether you believe or not, in that Moment of utter despair in your own life, You have done the same.

For me and every person I have ever met - even accounts of others I have heard or read about - are Hopeful that there is a benevolent God or are crying out to God; not only Hopeful in His existence, but that He will help us or those we love with help and healing.

That God will help us survive these circumstances that are beyond our control - whether we are facing a terminal diagnosis or an impending advancing storm. We all want to survive, and so we cry out to God - the One who is outside and beyond ourselves and our circumstances.

The wonderful partner I was blessed with - your mom, sister, daughter, aunt, and friend.

Amy didn't just know these circumstances - she lived them. Amy experienced Hope and Hopelessness at every turn on any given day from late September 2011 on.

I was blessed by God to be given the opportunity to be along for the ride - every up, every down, every twist, and every turn.

I saw first hand how Amy's Hopelessness turned into Hope - Real Hope and confidence that was beyond herself, beyond her circumstances, and beyond the doctors' best efforts.

A Hope in Amy's last days that went from a quiet confidence to an assurance of a reality Amy did not know - though Amy knew beyond measure and with absolute confidence she would experience.

I saw Amy transformed day by day as she looked to God for her strength and not in herself and others. Amy began to embody these verses as she testified to their truth with her words and her quiet character with each passing day...

"So we look not at things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are visible are temporal (just brief and fleeting), but the things which are invisible are everlasting and imperishable." (2 Corinthians 4:18, Amplified)

As Amy's journey progressed these truths came to be in full view...

"For We know that if the earthly tent (our physical body) which is our house is torn down (through death), we have a building from God a house not made of hands, eternal in the heavens.

For indeed in this house (our bodies) we groan, longing to be clothed with our (immortal, eternal) celestial dwelling, so that by putting it on we will not be found naked.*

For while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened (often weighed down, oppressed), not that we want to be unclothed (separated by death from the body), but to be clothed, so that what is mortal (the body) will be swallowed up by life (after the resurrection).

Now He who made us and prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the (Holy) Spirit as a pledge (a guarantee, a down payment on the fulfillment of His promise).

So then, being always filled with good courage and confident Hope, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - for we walk by faith, not by sight (living our lives in a manner consistent with our confident belief in God's promises)." (2 Corinthians 5:1-7, Amplified)

Amy's Hope became this...

"Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things Hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen (the conviction of their reality -- faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses)." (Hebrews 11:1, Amplified)

Amy, faith in hand, was able to live these verses before me and I believe before each of you as well...

"Therefore we do not become discouraged (spiritless, disappointed or afraid). Though our outer self is (progressively) wasting away, yet our inner self is being (progressively) renewed day by day. For our momentary, light distress (this passing trouble) is producing for us an external weight of glory (a fullness) beyond measure (surpassing all comprehensions, a transcendent splendor and endless blessedness)!" (2 Corinthians 4:16-17, Amplified)

Amy's Hope - confident and assured as God transformed Amy's Faith into Sight - transformed me.

Today, by God's grace, I can say that I, too, rest in Hebrews 11:1 in spite of the things that have knocked me down (losing Amy for a season) and other things that have come at me in this broken world.

I am so thankful to know and believe in the truths of 2 Corinthians 5:1-7.

In light of Amy's testimony of a life well lived, a Hope and Faith proved (into sight), I digress to those questions that I asked myself and now ask us all.

What is Hope and who are you placing your Hope in? Yourself or others?

Or maybe you might consider the One Amy had a quiet confidence in ---

The One who is her Rock.

The One who Amy entrusted her life and her soul to.

Amy's friend, confidant, and Savior, Jesus Christ, the lover of her soul.

Christ is still here today to grasp onto --- calling us all to come as He called Amy to come and follow Him now, not later. To enjoy the Hope He gives now, today.

For Christ says this to us...

*"Come to me, all who are weary and heavily burdened (by religious rituals [and the world, life *]) that provide no peace and I will give you rest (refreshing your souls with salvation)." (Matthew 11:28, Amplified)*

Christ continues...

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me (following Me as my disciple), for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest (renewal, and blessed quiet) for your souls. For my yoke is easy (to bear) and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30, Amplified)

Amy's testimony shines as a bright beacon to this wonderful truth...

"How blessed and greatly favored is the man (or woman) who trust in You (believing in You, relying on You and committing him [or herself*] to You with confident Hope and expectation)." (Psalm 84:12, Amplified)*

Amy's hope for us all is this...

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope and overflow with confidence in His promises." (Romans 15:13, Amplified)

I love you all,

Merry Christmas

Greg

* *My words*

A Word Regarding the Video

I want to thank all who contributed pictures: Martin, Pat, Joanna - who passed along many from the younger years - and Carmen - who sent me a picture of Amy holding her special dog, Marley.

Some of the images are fuzzy or pixelated. I apologize - those images are either from 20- or 30-year old film or images I tried to pull from video or DVD. Some of those images are hard to view, but I still included them for sentimentality or the smiles.

A Word About the Music

Its hard to pick 3 or 4 songs for videos each year when, since 2019, I have put together over 500 Amy-centric playlists made up of thousands of songs that were all either true to our relationship or spoke to who Amy was as a person. (Thanks for the gift of Spotify, Jake, that made this journey possible.)

I have promised a second video for years. Thanks for your patience as I worked through developing over 50 rolls of film (though sadly many images were lost due to time undeveloped), scanned other photos, and looked through videos for other memories. There is nothing extraordinary about the video - just images that I hope will ignite some beautiful memories of years gone by.

I have to thank my nephew, Micah, for putting in several hours helping me with organizing and gathering images from innumerable places. His help with this video was invaluable. And, speaking of invaluable,

I'd be remiss if I didn't thank his brother, Si for helping me with the May 2021 remembrance.

Lastly, a thousand words of thanks could never express the gratitude I have for my brother, Chris, who has poured in hours and hours to make these beautifully crafted Amy remembrances possible with kindness, patience, and time over these past years. A true example of what a labor of love looks like.

Thanks to you all! ♥