

Hope Motivates Better Than Pessimism

The November elections may come down to one main question: Whose base is more motivated? The answer to that question may come down to another important question: Whose base has more hope?

The Bible teaches that “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12, ESV). It also states that “The human spirit can endure a sick body, but who can bear a crushed spirit?” (Prov. 18:14, NLT).

There is plenty of physical sickness in our country today, led by the COVID-19 pandemic. And there is plenty of heart sickness as well, with a plague of fear, hopelessness, depression and suicide.

An Aug. 5 article on *Roll Call* stated that, “The nation’s suicide rate reached historic highs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with rates at the highest levels since World War II. Economic and social pressures this year have heightened the risks, worrying experts, health officials and lawmakers.”

Things were bad enough *before* the virus. They have gotten much worse since.

On Aug. 13, Politico reported that, “One in four young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 say they’ve considered suicide in the past month because of the pandemic, according to new CDC data that paints a bleak picture of the nation’s mental health during the crisis.”

It is difficult to live without hope. Difficult to live while believing that the world is crumbling around you. Difficult to live without something positive to look forward to.

Young people have been raised with constant fears of an impending world apocalypse, if not from climate change then from some other crisis, be it an alien invasion or an asteroid collision. And a slew of movies has underscored that fear. (An April 1, 2020 article on *Town and Country* carried the headline and subhead: “The Best Movies About the End of the World, to Watch at the End of the World. It’s bleak out there. So are these films.”)

That is why Americans today so desperately need hope. Real hope. Tangible hope. Hope they can sink their teeth into. More bad news will only depress.

Surely, there is not much joy in the midst of the riots and violent protests. Surely, there is not much joy in the midst of critical, hateful words.

Focusing only on what is wrong (or allegedly wrong) will solve nothing. Neither will it motivate in the long term. There must be a clear vision of light at the end of the tunnel. There must be a positive breakthrough in sight.

That’s why, when you read the biblical prophets, they concluded their messages of severe judgment with promises of hope. “You have sinned, and God will judge you, but if you repent, He will restore!”

Even in the book of Revelation, where Jesus brought strong messages to five of seven churches in Asia Minor, He ended each message with a promise to the ones who overcame (see Rev. 2-3). Yes, the situation is dire and calls for radical change. But there is hope for a better future.

The Republican National Convention is just getting started, but we can expect a stark contrast with the Democratic National Convention (DNC). The latter majored on what’s wrong with America, giving viewers little to cheer about, even after candidate Biden’s convention-ending speech, which struck a better tone.

That's why a right-wing website spoke of "Doomsday Democrats," offering, "10 Gloomy Moments From the Democratic National Convention."

The same website criticized former President Obama's convention speech, stating, "Former President Barack Obama on Wednesday abandoned his signature message of hope and change in his Democrat convention speech, choosing instead to deliver a dark warning to Americans led by President Donald Trump."

Trump himself followed in this line of criticism, stating, "Last week the Democrats held the darkest, angriest and gloomiest convention in American history. They spent four straight days attacking America as racist and a horrible country that must be redeemed."

Although the Republican National Convention is just getting started, you can expect a very different tone, one that instills hope and vision, one that makes Americans feel good about themselves. This difference in tone could be the deciding factor in the November elections.

Hatred is a powerful, motivating force (in the DNC's case, hatred of Trump). But hatred, without hope, will only motivate so far.

Which party and which leader will do the better job of instilling hope and giving vision? That could be the deciding factor a little over 70 days from now. {eoa}