

UCF Zoom Worship *Reflection on Adversity*: 11 April 2021

William Shakespeare wrote: “Sweet are the uses of adversity which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head.”

(reference: Read more at <https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/adversity-quotes>)

This long pandemic year has been difficult and unpleasant, even devastating for some, an extremely long pandemic year. But it has also provided an opportunity to ask -what is it we learn from adversity? What does adversity teach us about ourselves and the human condition? How has it made us more whole, compassionate human beings? Has it opened a doorway to spiritual awakening? Even made you more hopeful?

Some say adversity can make us stronger. In a 2010 AARP article, titled “*A little Bad Luck can be Good for Us*, University at Buffalo and UC-Irvine researchers found that people who encountered some misfortune in their lives emerged more resilient and adaptable than either those who had nothing bad happen to them *or* those with a long history of adversity.”

Even Walt Disney opined that “You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you!” When faced with a crisis, it can be difficult to imagine the experience will eventually lead to some type of growth. Adversity, however painful, can have a positive impact on us.

Overcoming difficult challenges builds self-confidence, teaches self-control and can foster an attitude of conscientiousness and empathy towards others.

Adversity can force you to find the good in your situation. It can trigger post-traumatic growth. The result can be enhanced concentration and peak performance.

Adversity shakes us to the core because it challenges our beliefs about ourselves and our place in the world. Adversity may show us that we are vulnerable, less important in the grand scheme of things than we thought, or that what we thought important before doesn't really matter.

*Tom Willis has crafted a message, as follows in quotes,
to share his personal reflections on adversity.*

“In everyone's life there is some adversity, great or small. We, who live in this small part of the beautiful earth, are very fortunate to be spared wars, famines, etc. that are a part of many people's lives. Everyday life is usually full of common

irksome annoyances which we learn to take in stride. But we are talking today about something quite different. With the Covid 19 pandemic, all of our lives have been altered or compromised in some ways. If you are fortunate to have a life style that is pretty much routine and predictable, then you may be experiencing some adversity in having to do things differently than your norm. That in itself is not necessarily bad. But let's say you are older, live alone, retired, then social isolation is hard. Or you have children who no longer go to school as usual, and everybody is driving each other crazy. Today we may discover ways that will help us get through this come out the better for it. We can endure, overcome, grow and expand, and maybe feel that we are better people for it.

If you are feeling in danger, desperate or hopeless, call a member of our pastoral care team now as listed in the UUCF newsletter or me, Tom Willis, at 984-234-1032. If at anytime you are feeling way too stressed out do not hesitate to call: Carteret County Crisis (844-708-4097), or Warm Line (800-273-8255). Otherwise, hang in there and you will learn ways to learn from adversity.

It always helps to first identify and define what is the real problem. "Well everything", (big sigh) is not really identifying the problem. Try to be specific. Problem solving requires us to really know what we think is wrong, assess our strengths, weaknesses, and needs. This is a great time to be honest with ourselves and, in doing so, find out more about who we really are. Further: what has worked for you in the past that made things better; and conversely, what have you tried that seemed to not help at all or made things worse? Again, be honest with yourself.

When your world is not the best it could be, it is not enough to tell yourself to not let it get you down. You have to do something to make it better and you can. We forget just how amazing our world is and the potential wonders that are there to be discovered.

From experience I know one of the best ways to help yourself is to help others. Volunteering in food pantries or local social service agencies is great if you are able. This is especially difficult in socially distanced times.

Look into that beautiful mind of yours and remember people you haven't heard from in ages. They would welcome a call, a card or letter. Renew a friendship. Whatever happened to old what's his or her name.? Take the initiative.

What may be interesting is to make new friends if you can. Maybe try pen pals (remember that?) See: seniorpenpals.net. Also try to explore your world and find out how big it really is. There are places close by that you haven't seen in a while or where you were always meaning to go. Take a ferry to Core Banks or Ocracoke Island. Get out into nature - into the air and sun, breathe it in like the joy that it is. Open out your arms and smile. If you are able, walk, swim, hop or skip a little. Do something daring and delightful!

Our community college offers a variety of inexpensive classes that you may use to further your knowledge or learn something new about a subject you have always wondered about.

A beautiful, very wise friend of mine said that there is no dress rehearsal for life. This is it! ”

Responsive reading #468 is from *Singing the Living Tradition*,
titled *We Need One Another*

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.

We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves.

We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose and cannot do it alone.

We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs.

We need one another in the hour of defeat, when with encouragement we might endure, and stand again.

We need one thither when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey.

All our lives are in need, and others are in need of us.

~George E. Odell

In conclusion, Lord Byron reminds us that “Adversity is the first path to truth.”

Perhaps we can learn from adversity: compassion & sensitivity, helping one another, self-knowledge & perspective, the limits of our control, flexibility, and seeing ourselves not as passive victims but as active agents with choice, who take responsibility.

When we learn from adversity, we can create time, space, and place for allowing recovery; to rest, breathe, reflect, forgive.

Lee Iacocca said, “In times of great stress or adversity, it's always best to keep busy, to plow your anger and your energy into something positive.”

Acknowledge what we are feeling; avoid denial. Focus on the positives; what is, not what isn't. Be introspective about what could have been different, what we can control and can do to recover.

Adversity teaches us about ourselves and the human condition- thereby making us more whole and compassionate human beings. And as we ponder the distresses of adversity, let's also remember the very small, but critical and joyful bits of life that sustain us.

Prayer

May today there be peace within.

May you trust your highest power that you are exactly

Where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you...

May you be content... and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. Amen.

Reflection on Adversity Zoom Worship Service by Daryl Walker, Tom Willis, and Marilynn Cullison, UCF Worship Committee members.