

## 26.1.25 - Love Makes Us Brave - Rev. Adam Hange

### **Witness of Scripture:** 2 Timothy 1:5-7, NRSV

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands, for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."

**Witness of Spirit:** by Pádraig Ó Tuama, poet and theologian from Belfast, Ireland - from his book of poems - *In the Shelter: Finding a Home in the World*

"To be human is to be in the image of something good, and image comes from imagination. To be human is to be in the imagination of God, and the imagination is the source of integrity as well as cracks. To be born is to be born into a story of possibility, a story of failure, a story of imagination and the failure of imagination. To be born is to be born with the possibility of courage. Hello to courage."

God is still speaking, **and we are still listening. Thanks be to God!**

### **Meditation**

"Love Makes Us Brave"

Rev. Adam Hange

*Hello to courage*—I love that line because it doesn't pretend courage is automatic. Courage is something we meet. Sometimes we resist it. Sometimes we grow into it. Sometimes we discover it only when we've already taken the next step.

Paul writes to Timothy from prison. From a place that might feel like failure, defeat, or hopelessness.

Timothy is young. Fearful. He is unsure of himself, unsure of his authority, unsure of what kind of leader he can be in a complicated and fragile moment.

And Paul doesn't shame him for his fear. He doesn't say, "You can do it! Just try harder." He says instead: *Remember who you are. Remember what has been planted in you.*

"God did not give us a spirit of cowardice," Paul writes, "but a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."

Not fearlessness. Courage.

Courage that is rooted in love. Courage that is shaped and steadied. Courage that knows fear is real—and does not let fear have the final word.

Ó Tuama reminds us that to be human is to be held in God's imagination. And God's imagination, he says, is the source of both integrity and cracks. We are not imagined into perfection. We are imagined into possibility.

That means Renee Good and Alex Pretti were created in the image of something good. It also means that every immigrant and every refugee is created in the image of something good. Every agent and every officer, too. And so are we.

Being made in God's image does not mean we always get it right. It means we are *capable* of imagination—and also of *failing to imagine* one another fully. It means we live inside stories of hope and harm, welcome and exclusion, bravery and retreat.

And if we're honest as a people and as a nation, our shared story is exactly that: a story of possibility, *and failure; imagination, and the failure of imagination.*

The question before us—always—is not whether fear will show up. It will. The question is what we do ... when it does.

Paul says: *Fan into flame the gift of God that is within you.*

Padraig says: *Hello to courage.*

And I want to say this morning: I am deeply grateful for the ministry of this church over the past year. I've seen courage here.

Courage that looks like showing up again and again.

Courage that looks like choosing relationship over retreat.

Courage that looks like staying at the table when it would be easier to walk away.

And, because of this, I am hopeful for our future together—not because I believe it will be easy, but because I know... courage is already among us.

Every day takes courage. Some days it's loud and visible. Some days it's quiet and costly. But I believe the seeds of faith, hope, and solidarity planted by generations before us... are bearing good fruit... and will continue to bear good fruit.

Not because we are perfect. But because there is Love present here... and I know that it is Love that makes us brave.

So as we move into the work before us today, may we remember who we are.  
May we remember the story we are part of.

May we warmly greet Courage - when its moment arrives.

And may the Spirit, who promises us power, love, and steady, faithful hearts, grant us courage, and lead us forward.

Amen.