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Senior Sermon
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Greetings and Salutations fellow chapel dwellers. It feels that it only has been a few short months since my adventure at Augustana has begun. Now I am old and I go to bed at 11PM. Thus, I thank you for coming to hear my wisdom less sermon today.

Indeed it has been race with my faith and throughout the lives other here. I feel that there are plenty of times where we on rampage and feel connected with God, but other times we lose all signs up hope and give up. The race has taken me through some great times and even through times of trial and tribulation. I have transferred schools for 4 days and I have come home early from working at Klein Ranch due to illness. I have plugged in the Christmas tree the day before the ceremony and I have climbed roofs of buildings on campus and led tunnel tours, but the one thing that I still cling to is the future hope from Jesus' death and resurrection. The future of hope is realizing that I am a tax collector that is a sinner and letting go of control. How does hope fit in to the description of running the race and being sinner? Stay tuned.

I have learned a few things about life during my time here at Augustana, but I would like to share two. Our gospel for today talks about the Tax collectors and Pharisees. The Pharisee prayed for himself and put himself above all else. He was thanking God that he was not like the lowly tax collectors. Furthermore, he was thanking God for personal items hoping to control his life. The tax collector knew that he was a sinner and he just wanted help from being who he was. This idea creates a very compelling idea in determining our faith and our hope.

During the last year and half, I have suffered from major depression and it has taught me plenty of ideas about faith, life and hope. First, I learned that control of everything in life is not necessarily possible. Only God can control life. When we try to take control, we make ourselves God. As humans, we have natural tendency to want to control all aspects of life. The Pharisees also had the same notion and put themselves above all else. I learned to let go and put my trust in God. The same also applies to what I do with myself. Where do I place my hope in? Do I place it in my x-box and hope that I can forget about life for while. (no pun intended) Do I use other depressants and stimulants to help me feel better? I using other forms of control to try and control my life. Luther stated in a sermon that beginning of goodness and godliness does not lie in us but in the word of God. Control has been issue during my college career. I have gone through so many ideas of what I want to do with my life. I have become infatuated with understanding my career path and my interest. It went so far as to transferring schools to SDSMT for four days because I thought I wanted to be a meteorologist. Let me tell you all, what a womenless campus. Very shortly, I realized that the school wasn't for me and I came back to Augie. One of the best decisions that I have made during my college career. Deciding what to do towards controlling my life has been hard. When I control, I lose hope in Jesus.

Martin Luther once said that "everything done in the world is done by hope". Hope carries a powerful attachment and can sway mind in any direction. Many of us, including myself, tend to turn to God when we are in a deep pit of despair. We use God as an emergency or backup

generator. C.S. Lewis wrote a great book on pain and believing in an all knowing God. In the "Problem with Pain" Lewis writes, We regard God as an airman regards his parachute; it's there for emergencies but he hopes he'll never have to use it". We use God as a crutch in times of trouble. I am guilty of what C.S Lewis describes in emergencies. We hope that we are always doing fine and dandy but that is not always the truth. Again Luther offers an explanation to why we look for and live for hope. Martin Luther made a very good statement on the reasoning of hope. All which happens in the whole world happens through hope. No husbandman would sow a grain of corn if he did not hope it would spring up and bring forth the ear. How much more are we helped on by hope in the way to eternal life! We look for that little piece of hope, but during depression, hope can be gone. I have worked very hard at trying to keep my hope in Jesus, but it has been a struggle. You hear from others, put your trust in Jesus.

As easy as that statement sounds, it is not the easiest thing to do in the world. If it were easy, I would not suffer from depression. The world would not have 1 in 3 people suffer from depression at some point in their lives. If it were true, we would be happy and find faith in one Glorious God that constantly loves us. If it were true, in theory I would wake up feeling great about life when I am going through an episode. If it were true, I wouldn't wake up every morning to the restroom being cleaned and standing there in agony doing the potty dance. But the fact of the matter is that God is still there for us. Paul puts it well that we are on a race of faith. Faith that is bound by the will but ultimately we choose were to go with it. Furthermore, it is faith that paramount to our understanding of life and how we choose to feel. Depression is not a state where you can just "snap out" by putting trust in our Lord, but it is a deep state of darkness that controls our mind and thought. Second, I learned deep pit many us still can't find the hope even though motivation to pray attend and church and other things, I think subconsciously I clung to the hope that I have left. The hope that Jesus brings light into the darkness.

Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor - that is the only way out of a hole. I have to let go of the control I once had to find a way out and hope in Jesus. We use the guidance of the Lord to try and find a candle at the end of very long hallway. This is hope and hope is very precious to anything that we live for.

During my sophomore year of college, I had the opportunity to take a trip to Cedar Rapids to help with the flood clean-up. First, it was an eye-opening experience to see what damage had been done, but more importantly to see the help that was coming in a constant basis was enough to give me hope for these people. The clean-up crew that helped gave the residents a piece of mind and a piece of hope that someday their home will be clean. This hope is enough for someone to cling too and find hope in Jesus. This is hope that Jesus brings us.

We don't use hope to humble ourselves so that we can be put on a pedestal above the rest, but we use it to find others and to do good works. Luther's primary purpose of faith was in doing so that we are not justified by good works but by faith alone. We need hope to find that faith. Recently, I struggled with the thoughts post-graduation and life in its wholeness and it really sent me downward. I tried very hard to not lose faith in the one Creator but it was very hard to see any hope. I knew it would get better, but it became hard to see it. The race of faith has become

a very hard uphill battle, but as I slowly recovered I could see the light of God better. Paul's race has become a symbolic representation of how one's journey can be through life. We are called by Jesus to go and serve the world with a loving and kind heart. Not because our faith dependent upon it but because of our unconditional love for God and his people.

How can I apply these aspects to life? I realized that I am no longer in control in my life and that I am a huge sinner. The tax collector admitted so am I and relearning to put my hope in Jesus. Even after the pain I have been through. It was a daily challenge to continually accept that I am a sinner and that when even my hope in Jesus is gone, He still chooses us as his people.

In conclusion, a camp story summarizes this all. At Klein Ranch, on Wednesday night, we take a 40 minute bus ride to go about 8 miles in pasture to a historic Episcopal stone church down in the Firestone Creek Valley. The bus ride is filled with songs and laughter. Even one time I managed to make Boom-Chick-A-Boom last the whole bus ride. It was an epic time. Anyway, we get down to the church and the staff runs in to check for rattlesnakes and set up the candles for a more aesthetically pleasing experience. The campers come in for a candle light service and we play soft music and have a powerful message. Many of the campers are crying afterwards as they are touched by the experience and the beauty of the place we are in. They feel the hope of Jesus and they feel what it is like to experience God and to feel chosen even though we are sinners. They are reminded that they are called by God to go serve the world. And with that, they leave with the hope of Jesus for their lives.

Amen