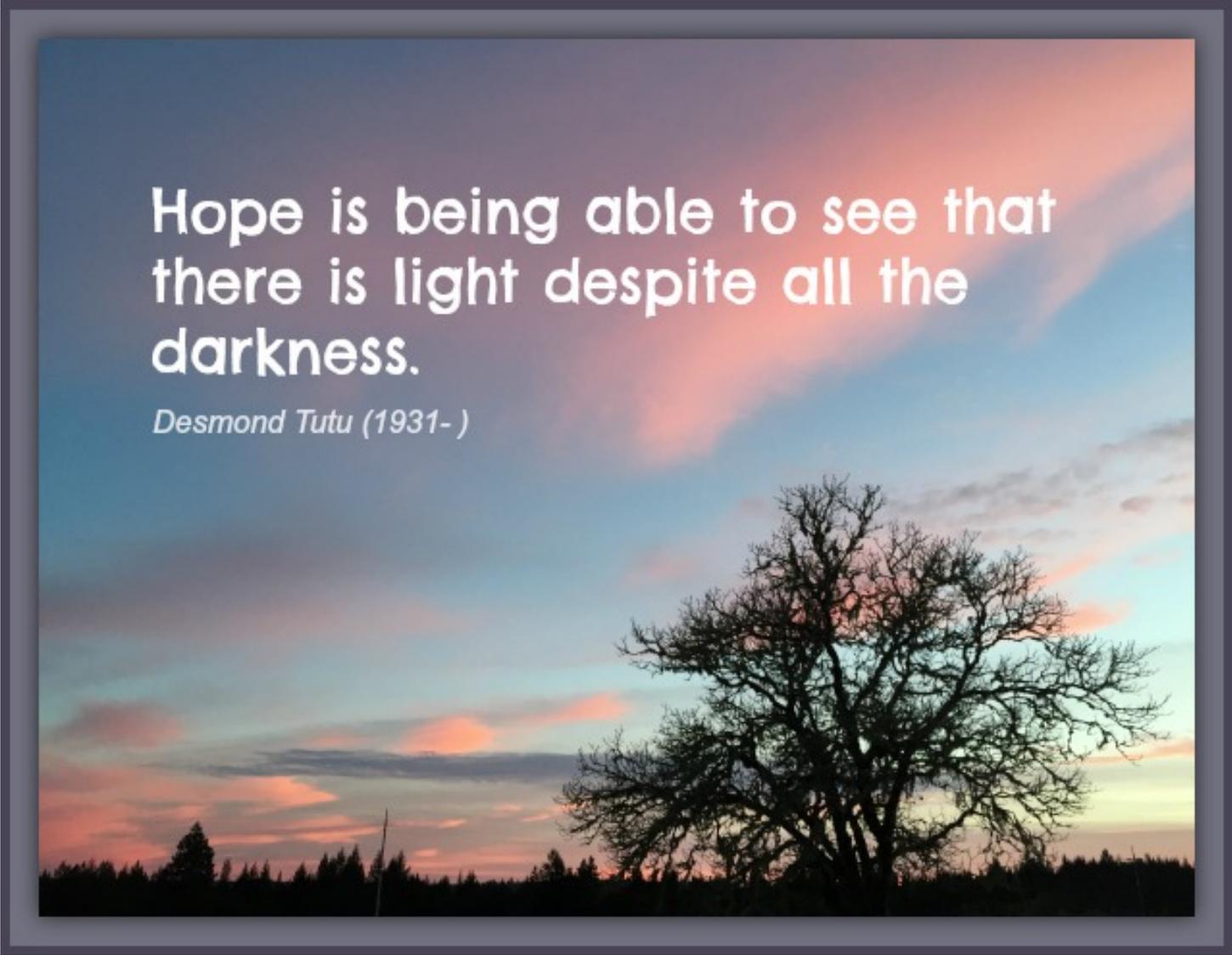


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A quote by Desmond Tutu is displayed in white text against a background of a sunset sky with a silhouette of a tree. The quote reads: "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness." Below the quote, the author's name and dates are given: "Desmond Tutu (1931-)".

Hope is being able to see that
there is light despite all the
darkness.

Desmond Tutu (1931-)

RAMBLING THOUGHTS IN EARLY SPRING

Often my day, and maybe yours also, starts with opening my computer and finding a growing list of requests to sign petitions and make donations. There are also messages from people who are desperately concerned about the condition of our world, our country, our communities, our families, ourselves.

I can't help thinking about the wisdom expressed in Chapter 80 of THE TAO, and how far our goals seem from these few ancient lines.



*Let countries be small with
few people:*

*Though there may be
machines that would increase
production ten to
a hundred times*

they are not used.

*The people are mindful
of death and do not*

*journey to far
places.*



They have ships and wagons but no one uses them.

They have a warehouse of weapons

but there is no occasion to display them.

*The people give up writing
and return to knotting cords.*

They are satisfied with their food.

They are pleased with their clothes.

They are content with their homes.

They delight in their simple ways.

They can see another country

*and can hear dogs barking and cocks crowing in it,
still the people grow old and die*

without ever coming into conflict.



Because of climate change, growing things around me are waking up early. Blossoms are exploding in a sort of Hallelujah Chorus. Because of the recent wildfires, large flocks of birds continue to come and find relief in the forests that surround us. I notice that the young people here, who often take afternoon walks with earphones, are letting those little white things drop to their shoulders as they listen to the music of the birds happily getting ready for the night. Their example is catching. A few afternoons ago Sister Julie, instead of starting the meditation before Vespers by playing music, simply walked over and opened the doors. We listened to the birds instead.

But there is some worry about the water that all these plants and birds will need. The days are truly lovely — but there is no indication of rain in the forecasts. Well, one day at a time.



As I sat on the Haiku Bench this afternoon two stories floated in my mind. One came from the *New York Times*. 1200 students signed up for a class on Psychology And the Good Life. The professor of the class believes that in high school students were encouraged to forget

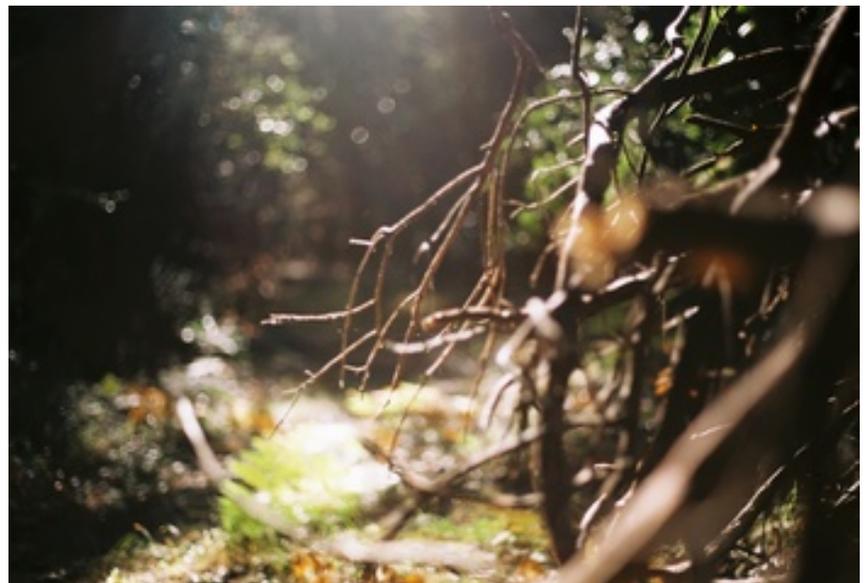


about their happiness and focus on gaining admission to a prestigious school. Recently it was discovered that half of the undergraduates sought mental health care during their time at Yale. As one freshman put it, *"In reality, a lot of us are anxious,*

stressed, unhappy, numb." The final exam for the class? Designing a personal self-improvement project — a "good life" that values happiness!

The other story came from an old and very valued friend. It concerned a six-year-old girl with inoperable cancer. My friend was volunteering long ago in the cancer ward. These are his words,

She turned her back to everyone and refused to say a word. Her mother worked hard and had several children at home so could visit only twice a week, and the little girl turned her back to her mother and would never speak to her either. One



day I sat in the girl's room and just drew pictures. Still no response. I tried to draw a picture of her mother from seeing her on one of those

sad visits and put the picture in front of the girl. She finally spoke: "If you promise not to ever tell my mama or anyone in the hospital, I'll tell you why I am mean." I promised. She said, "I'm mean so mama won't miss me when I die." I was told that she had that picture of her mother hidden in her bag of clothes when she died. I kept her secret and when I think of that little girl and her mother, I think of sacrifice beyond my understanding.

A Yale auditorium, a cancer ward — to borrow from Rumi (1207–1273), *There are as many paths to happiness as there are souls on the earth.* Actually he said "*paths to heaven*" but I don't think he would object to my tweaking it a bit to fit the stories.

"Sacrifice beyond our understanding" — I think we need much more of that.



A haiku Sister Marti wrote once when I was sitting on this bench with her comes to mind,

*The rosebud looks still
and yet moment by moment
it is unfolding.*

From a troubled world, to Marti's rose, with the help of a brave little girl, and a lot of birds — never lose hope!



Brother Toby

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