

It's time to save the soul of our metro

From time to time inspirational leadership, political or otherwise, resonates with a community. Their vision draws out the best of all of us, and the atmosphere and actions are noticeable. It's that inspiring atmosphere of hope that seems to be scarce in our city and from our leaders. But, there is something we can do about it.

Top Gun was worth the watch. I was in boarding school when the first one came out and our whole school watched it together.

The projector was the size of a Mini Cooper.

Recently I hosted an international guest, and we decided a movie would be a good night out.

We went to an early showing, so there were only 10 people in the theatre.

A couple at the back, my guest and a friend and I, and immediately behind us, a father with 4 pre-teens.

They didn't get it. The movie that is, dad loved it.

I know because the teens became distracted. And soon we were the victims of a popcorn war.

I was a little embarrassed for my guest. I tried to tame them a bit, but what stuck out to me the most was dad.

He refused to look in our direction or theirs.

With an absolute focus on the credits at the end, he pretended he saw nothing.

This and the next story I'll share brings me to the point of this article.

Have we given up on the basics?

Is there a spiritual side to keeping our hope alive?

Are things hopeless?

I suggest they don't have to be.

Hope, the Bible says, is an anchor to the soul. Without it, we are adrift.

The second story set me on the path of an amateur detective.

Annoyed by the total disregard and disrespect for our city and my space, I've been forced to catch a culprit.

Our church is immediately adjacent to a freeway off-ramp.

Every few weeks someone puts their black refuse bags into their vehicle, and instead of dispensing with them appropriately, they throw them out of their car from the bridge to the intersection below.

The intersection at our church.

I fetched the bags and started scrabbling around looking for an address.

Mind you, I think the city could be cleaner and a few bags may not make a huge difference.

And again, I wonder about hopelessness.

Have we decided that it'll never get better, so what's the point?

Has our metro leadership lost all hope, and in turn collapsed ours?

How do we keep hope and vision for a better future alive in the face of fights on so many fronts?

I'm not a Methodist, I came to faith through one of those "happy-clappy" type churches, and now shepherd one.

But I admire the history of the Methodists.

When the Wesleyan revival came, new believers took responsibility for their lives, and their streets.

They did things with excellence and so methodically, that the name stuck.

We may have to spark change from the streets to city hall, rather than waiting for city hall to change our streets.

To quote a controversial author, "the fact that the market is not doing what we wish it would do is no reason to automatically assume that the government would do better." — Thomas Sowell.

If they're distracted, we'll have to demonstrate a vision for ourselves and provoke one another towards good works.

This is the biblical pattern for faith, hope, and love.

To quote the Good Book “23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:23-25 New King James Version).

I’ve taken a bit of ownership of the off-ramp.

Cleaning the verge, having the grass mowed and the trees trimmed.

It’s not my job, but I can’t keep watching this movie and pretending nothing is happening.

I expect guests to visit our city and our church, and I see my world through their eyes.

I don’t want to be embarrassed.

Thomas Sowell goes on to say “There are no solutions. There are only trade-offs.” (A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles).

My inconvenience compensates for unacceptable conditions.

That’s how Biblical hope works. An expectation of the arrival of something better.

A wonderful thing has started happening on the street.

The granite place across the road mowed their verge.

The engineering firm down the street swept the pavement - of the whole sheet.

Our landlord jumped in and provided transport and some labour to clean and collect.

A little effort created a lot of hope.

Unspoken pressure mounted on a messy neighbour. They repaired their own broken bins.

We’re getting somewhere.

We have surrendered too much territory.

When we don’t vote, we surrender.

When we don’t set a standard, we surrender and when we don’t even try, we surrender.

Let's not become “movie dads,” who find staring at nothing easier than starting at reality.

For faith, we are taught, “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11: 1 NKJV).

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