

Hope...



Artwork by Ally Barrett

For reflection or discussion

- Where do you turn in scripture for stories that help you to feel hope?
- Where do you turn in your own story in order to rediscover a sense of hope?
- What have you seen recently that ignited a spark of hope?
- What opportunities might you have to be part of how God ignites a spark of hope in others at this time?

Hope is sometimes secret. It grows quietly, taking root, coming to life, even (or especially) when it is unseen. But though unseen, hope is not without substance – throughout the ages, people of faith have told and retold stories, and sung songs, of God’s faithfulness, drawing from them even in the challenges and tragedies of their present moment, there is still hope for a future that is in God’s hands. Hope comes from God’s presence in our troubles.

*But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and through the rivers,
they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.*

Isaiah 43

And when we ourselves feel overwhelmed by the present, we may remember that we, too, are part of God’s multifaceted and rich gift to the world, part of the way in which God’s purposes are revealed and made real in the world.

*I will give thanks unto thee,
for I am fearfully and wonderfully made
marvellous are thy works,
and that my soul knoweth right well.
My bones are not hid from thee
though I be made secretly,
and fashioned beneath in the earth.
Thine eyes did see my substance,
yet being imperfect
and in thy book were all my members written;
Which day by day were fashioned
when as yet there was none of them.*

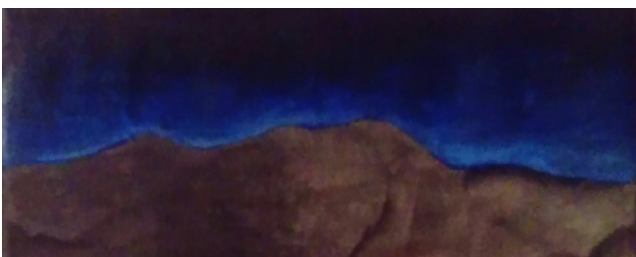
Psalms 139

Our hope springs not only from our faith in God, but from God’s faith in us.

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Hope is sometimes surprising, appearing as if from nowhere, like a sudden light shining in the darkness. Or it may offer more warmth than light, flickering like a candle flame transforming the gloom from fearful to cosy.

Or it may be like the slow lightening of the Eastern sky at dawn, growing imperceptibly until we can no longer deny that morning has come.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good;

Genesis 1

If I say, peradventure the darkness shall cover me then shall my night be turned to day.

Yea, the darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day the darkness and light to thee are both alike.

Psalm 139

Hope is light **in darkness**. Hope is not the day itself, but the promise of a new dawn. Hope is knowing that although we sit in darkness, God sits with us, bringing light quietly, softly, warmly, or perhaps suddenly, brightly, powerfully.

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8

For reflection or discussion

- In the Northern hemisphere, Advent is full of images of light in darkness. What kinds of light are you cherishing at the moment?
- What has helped you be aware of God with you in the darkness?