

Hope in a time of chaos

Sunday 19 April 2020

Unshakeable God, you are our ever-present help in times of trouble. Amidst all the isolation, grief and fear caused by this crisis, renew in us your peace, restore to us your perspective, and reveal to us your presence as we spend this time with you now.

We rejoice in the hope of God's unfailing love today, and praise him in the words of Psalm 33:18-22:

¹⁸ Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,

¹⁹ to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.

²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and shield.

²¹ Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.

²² Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Paul, writing to the church in Rome, speaks of this hope and prays that it will be a daily reality in the lives of all God's people.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

To know God is to know hope. His will for us, according to Paul, is fullness of joy, fullness of peace and so much hope that it overflows from our lives into everyone we meet. They walk away from spending time with us feeling brighter, more confident, less worried. How on earth is this possible, especially right now when the world is so bleak and our own personal circumstances are so incredibly difficult? Well, it's not about positive thinking. The apostle Paul says that we receive peace and joy by trusting God, and we receive hope by being filled with the power of his Holy Spirit. Against the background of confusing newspaper headlines and almost continuous news cover on both radio and television that does as much to frighten as to inform, we pause today and ask, in what areas of my life do I struggle to hold on to hope? And could it be because I am struggling to trust God in these areas?

I love this idea of being a hope-dispenser at such a hopeless time when there are so many desperate people all around. And yet of course I am not immune to all the despair, the heartbreak and the real problems of the world. I often feel hopeless, but God does not. And so I take a little time now asking him to fill me afresh, that I might 'overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'

Pause and pray

For ourselves, we admit to God the places in which we find it hard to trust him. Can we begin to imagine what his best for me might look like in these areas? We pray that we will listen for any words or promises he might want to speak into our fear.

For others, we pray for those we know whose situation seems desperate, asking the Lord to show us any practical ways in which we might share with them a little of his hope this week.

In this chaotic time I receive the comfort of Jesus' promise in John 14, choosing to trust him in this life as well as in the one to come:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

Whatever today may hold,
whatever tomorrow might bring,
the future is secure,
for Christ is with us,
the same yesterday, today and for ever.

Live each moment with him
in quiet confidence and joyful celebration,
for he is ours
and we are his
for all eternity.

Amen.