

# HOPE

## PRISONERS OF HOPE

WEEK 2: FINDING HOPE IN THE PROPHETS

week 2



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“Those who wait for  
the Lord will renew their  
strength, they will mount up  
with wings like eagles, they  
will run and not be weary,  
they will walk and not faint.”

Isaiah 40:31

Memory Verse Week 2



## MONDAY – A need for hope



**Isaiah 40: 31** *“but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*

### How does the dictionary define hope?

*a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen. OR to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true.*

Most people understand **hope** as wishful thinking, as in "I **hope** something will happen." This is not what the Bible means by **hope**.

The biblical **definition of hope** is "confident expectation." **Hope** is a firm assurance regarding things that are unclear and unknown (**Romans 8: 24-25; Heb 11: 1, 7**).

The little kingdom of Judah had lost its way spiritually and ignored their covenant with God. 2 Kings 25 tells of the final disaster in 586 BC when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and carried thousands of its people away. The freedom of the people was curtailed, the land felt strange, life as they knew it had ceased, they were disoriented and needed to learn a new way of life.

Does this sound a little familiar? We too are entering a 'new land'. A land where our behaviour will have to change.

How will we respond to the call to be 'prisoners of hope?'

*I love the way Eugene Peterson in "Living the Message speaks of Christian hope which alerts us. "Hope is a response to the future which has its foundations in the promises of God. It looks to the future as time for the completion of God's promise. It refuses to extrapolate either desire or anxiety into the future, but instead*



believes that God's promise gives the proper content to it. But hope is not a doctrine about the future: it is a grace cultivated in the present, it is a stance in the present which deals with the future. As such it is misunderstood if it is valued only for the comfort it brings; as if it should say, "Everything is going to be all right in the future because God is in control of it, therefore relax and be comforted." Hope operates differently. Christian hope alerts us to the possibilities of the future as a field of action, and as a consequence fills the present with energy."



**Prayer:** Thank you God that when we feel disoriented and confused You don't give up on us. AMEN

## TUESDAY – Hope is on the way



**Jeremiah“ 29: 5; 11-13** *Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*

The people of Judah were hoping that their exile would not be a lengthy one, but Jeremiah sent word to tell them to settle down. Not the news they wanted to hear!

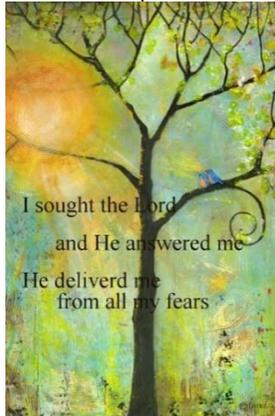
For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” However, Jeremiah follows this advice with a promise from God. Words of encouragement.

Words of hope. Words to cling to.

Jeremiah’s words presuppose that there is no quick fix for the community. This doesn’t mean the situation is hopeless, it does mean that people need to be prepared to take the long view.

What does the long view mean for us? It means reorientation. Look back and remember how many times God has brought you through tough situations in the past. Can you list them? The word ‘remember’ occurs 167 times in the NIV. Look back so that you can look forward in hope. Perhaps there have been times of illness or financial crisis. Perhaps there was

a relationship which was in trouble. Remember. Remember. Remember.



Some words of wisdom by Richard Rohr “*The theological virtue of hope is the patient and trustful willingness to live without closure, without resolution, and still be content and even happy because our satisfaction is now at another level, and our Source is beyond ourselves*”

**Jeremiah 29: 13** holds the key to our moving forward in hope “*when you search for me, yes, search for me with all your heart, you will find me.*”

This is the time to search for God in every aspect of your daily life. See Him in the past. See Him in the present. See Him in your future and be filled with hope.



**Prayer:** God of hope and comfort, keep me focused on Your words and keep me filled with Your hope. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Hope reaches out



**Jeremiah 31: 10-13** “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.’

For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD.....I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

Jeremiah’s message was one of hope but was long-term hope, not immediate. And the key for the people was to choose a new covenant with God. This covenant would engrave God’s instructions on their hearts as they understood God’s profound desire to forgive and restore them.

### God – reaching out

Have you experienced the transforming power of God’s forgiveness? How might experiencing a new covenant with God help to rebuild trust and hope in our country at a time such as this?

How might you help to take the long view of our current situation and trust patiently as you walk with God? **Us- reaching out** - How might you be a bringer of hope to someone today? A word or an act of kindness. Perhaps someone is struggling with the illness of a loved one, maybe someone you know just needs to talk. Helping others rubs off on the giver – digging deep into your faith very often results in

AND WHAT DOES  
**THE LORD**  
REQUIRE OF YOU?

TO ACT JUSTLY  
TO LOVE MERCY  
TO WALK HUMBLY

WITH YOUR GOD.  
MICAH 6:8

you gaining hope when you offer comfort to another.

### Us – reaching out.

*We’ll walk with God  
Through ev’ry valley.  
We’ll walk with God  
through ev’ry storm.  
And on the day our  
earthly walk is done,*

*We’ll sing before the throne - we  
never walked alone*

*O Lord, You are the way; You are  
the journey.*

*Walking beside us as we go.*

**Joseph M Martin**

"May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears."

Today the challenge is to be a bringer of hope to someone. Take time to prayerfully think about a person, and then act on this.



**PRAYER:** Loving God, with all my heart I want to be a part of Your hope-filled future. It’s often hard for me to wait, so keep teaching me to trust Your timing more than my restless demands. AMEN.

## THURSDAY – Hope is an action



**Isaiah 40: 27-31** *Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God”? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

The following is an extract of a message by Richard Rohr on Covid-19. You can access the entire message on Google. It is worth reading. <https://cac.org/love-alone-overcomes-fear-2020-03-19/#gsc.tab=0>

”Right now I’m trying to take in psychologically, spiritually, and personally, what is God trying to say? When I use that phrase, I’m not saying that God causes suffering to teach us good things. But God does use everything, and if God wanted us to experience global solidarity, I can’t think of a better way. We all have access to this suffering, and it bypasses race, gender, religion, and nation.

We are in the midst of a highly teachable moment. There’s no doubt that this period will be referred to for the rest of our lifetimes. We have a chance to go deep, and to go broad. Globally, we’re in this together. Depth is being forced on us by great suffering, which as I like to say, always leads to great love.

But for God to reach us, we have to allow suffering to wound us. Now is no time for an academic solidarity with the world. Real solidarity needs to be felt and suffered. That’s the real meaning of the word “suffer” – to allow someone else’s pain to influence us in a real way. We need to move beyond our own personal feelings and take in the whole.

I hope this experience will force our attention outwards to the suffering

of the most vulnerable. Love always means going beyond yourself to otherness. It takes two. There has to be the lover and the beloved. We must be stretched to an encounter with otherness, and only then do we know it’s love. This is what we call the subject-subject relationship. Love alone overcomes fear and is the true foundation that lasts (1 Corinthians 13:13)”.



**PRAYER:** God, today I invite you to focus my attention on the plight of those most vulnerable and to reach out wherever I am able to ensure their safety and well-being. AMEN

Everyday I have a choice:

**I choose...**

**LOVE**  
Over fear.

## FRIDAY – Prisoners of hope



**Zechariah 9: 12** *Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.*

What does being “a prisoner of hope” mean to you?

As we look back to what the prophets in the Old Testament heard in the midst of calamity, perhaps we begin to recognise the call of God into a right relationship with Him. A call to a deeper, more caring and mutually better relationship with those around us and with the world that we inhabit.

The devastating effects of the virus call us to renew our covenant with God and to recognise our responsibilities within that relationship. In our preoccupation with our immediate situation and how we are affected, and our hope for relief, we need to look beyond the immediate and realise that there is much more than that to our life in God’s world.

Perhaps the answer to this pandemic can be found in what we – in our partnership with God through the Holy Spirit - will make of it.

So, how do we find hope in the changes we need to make? In talking to others during this time it

has been clear that many of us have realised that we do indeed have enough. Enough shelter. Enough food. Enough clothing. **Enough to share.**

We have noted that with fewer vehicles on the roads, air is cleaner. We have found the simple joy of being fully present with those in our homes.

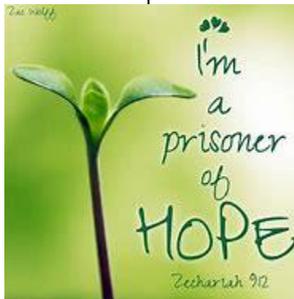
We have learned anew to worship in our homes.

Many have become aware of the need to exercise.

Thousands have reached out to make masks, pack food parcels.

But, when life returns to ‘normal’, whatever that may be, will we be ready as ‘prisoners of hope’ to continue in the things we have learned?

I pray that as we move forward slowly, the changes in us will continue to produce a new and better and God pleasing way of life.



**PRAYER:** God of hope, I put my trust in you. Teach me new and better ways of living so that my life may reflect your abundant love. AMEN

**Acknowledgement:** Church of Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas  
Friar Richard Rohr  
Walter Brueggemann