

Curate's Letter – February 2020

Dear Friends,

What does it mean to be people of hope?

When we read the headlines there seems to be much cause for despair. Conflicts are rife on a domestic, national and international scale. There are news of awful crimes, alarming statistics and photographs of the climate crisis, and many are suffering. The world seems to be filled with hell rather than crammed with heaven.



When we face such challenges, it may be tempting to numb ourselves or to focus only on the good things of life... And yet, in order to have hope, we must first sit tight to the truth.

When prophets speak in the Bible, they do not sugarcoat the words of the Lord. They offer hard, withering critiques of the destruction they see in their communities. We see that sin ripples out, having an impact on a local, national and global scale. And, uncomfortably, each of us are invited to consider our part in the mess.

Perhaps there's almost some relief in having the diagnosis of 'sin'. In the Christian faith, we see that no one is immune from sin, and all have fallen short of the glory of God. We are all in the same boat. And yet, the boat is not doomed to sink, for Christ offers us a different way. Through his life, death and resurrection, we see that sin, suffering and death do not have the final word. When it looks like Christ too has been swallowed up by the injustice and oppression of the world, the Father raises him from death to life by the Spirit. He takes away our sin and brings us the possibility of a new start. His resurrection means we can be people of hope.

Hope does not mean we get what we want and nor does it mean that everything will come up roses. Hope, instead, is the robust expectation that God will never leave us nor forsake us.

The problem with hope is that it gives us responsibility. Jurgen Moltmann, who came to faith in a prisoner of war camp in Belgium, wrote about this challenge: "...faith, wherever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience.... Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is."

Hope is subversive for it entails admitting that all is not as it should be. As Christ's people of hope, we are holding out for something better: the Kingdom of God, where divine justice, mercy and peace reign. Our task is to live and to trust the message that Christ's gospel means hope for the whole world and for creation.

When we read the news, may we heed Karl Barth's advice to hold the Bible with one hand and the news headlines with the other. Let us remember the hope to which we are called to proclaim afresh to this generation. May God give us the grace and strength to be people full of truth and full of hope.

With love,

Rachel