

People of Hope and Faith: Meditation and Message 12-1-24 Rev Brigid Beckman

Please pray with me and for me that all the God of Hope wishes to express in us today is called forth in my words and in my heart.

Hope by Rev Steve Garnaas-Holmes

*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.*

—Hebrews 11.1

Hope is not optimism, not wishing,
not a bet on the future,
but trust in what is already present, unseen.
I hope in the sunrise because the earth is already turning.
My faith is not that God will intervene
and make things better or fix problems;
my faith is that love is at work.
I trust in hidden love even as injustice runs loose.
I believe in our Oneness even as war and racism wound us.
I know our Belovedness even as we assault each other.
Even though we damage the earth,
though the violent rage and the rich oppress the poor,
still this world is born of Goodness,
and grace flourishes even in bad places,
and Love holds us in aching but untiring arms.
Even when the way is not well lit, I live in hope.

Meditation

Come into these moments of quiet, just as they are. Shift or wiggle to let any places where your body may be holding tension to soften and settle in and simply breathe...

Feel yourself supported, noticing how the back of your body touches where you sit. Sense your feet resting on the floor beneath you, and let your hands rest comfortably by your side or on your lap.

You may want to close your eyes, or simply let your gaze soften and drop, or focus on the light of the candle. Notice the sensation of your breath in, and out, and where your body moves gently as you inhale and exhale.

- Call to mind a situation or relationship in your own life, or in the larger world that cries out for transformation, see it, just as it is in this moment, and picture you are holding it gently in your left hand
- Now gently hold your left hand cupped in your right hand, feel your concerns held in the untiring arms of Love
- Bring your awareness to your left hand as you breathe in and out. Sense that which troubles your heart held in the blessing of Love: the chaos and brokenness, your sorrows and fears
- Bring your awareness to your right hand as you continue gently breathing in and out, holding your concerns lightly in Love; breathe hope and faith that Love is healing all things, though you cannot yet see how
- Bring your hands together in prayer position, laying down *all that is and all that will be* at the altar of Love

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

Taking a deeper breath or two, come back gently to the room...

Message: People of Hope and Faith

Mis estimados; My friends, do not lose heart.

We were made for these times. I have heard from so many recently who are deeply and properly bewildered.... ours is a time of almost daily astonishment and often righteous rage over the latest degradations of what matters most.... you are right in your assessment.... yet, I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirits dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. Most particularly because, the fact is that we were made for these times. Yes. For years, we have been learning, practicing, been in training for and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement.

~Clarissa Pinkola Estes from "Letter to a Young Activist During Troubled Times," **2001**

Psalm 42:1–3, 5, 7–11

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
So my soul longs for you, O God
My soul thirsts for God, for the living
God,
When shall I come and behold the face
of God?
My tears have been my food day and
night,
While people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”
Why are you cast down, O my soul,
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again give
praise,
My help and my God....
Deep calls to deep
At the thunder of your torrents;
All your waves and your billows

Have gone over me.
By day the Lord commands God’s
steadfast love,
And at night God’s song is with me,
A prayer to the God of my life.
I say to God, my rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?”
As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”
Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within
me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise
him,
my help and my God.

Scripture scholar Walter Brueggemann looks back into the depth of Hebrew scriptures, connecting us NOW to those ancient texts that remind us, “Hope is a trust in what God has done and will do, in spite of evidence to the contrary. Hope in gospel faith is not just a vague feeling that things will work out, for it is evident that things will not just work out. **Rather, hope is the conviction, against a great deal of data, that God is tenacious and persistent in overcoming the deathliness of the world, that God intends joy and peace.**”

It was ever thus! Linking the lamenting hope and faith of psalm 42 with the words of Clarissa Estes, written in 2001 with the laments of my own heart today calms my fears of the unknown and brings me back to the deeper truth that LOVE bears all things... (show cupped hands)

What does it mean to be a people of Hope and Faith when all around us we see evidence, data, that “things will not just work out?” It means we must look with the “eyes of our hearts of faith” to see the deeper evidence that **God is tenacious and persistent in overcoming the deathliness of the world, that God intends joy and peace.**”

And yet, God persisted!

In this season of Advent, the rhythms of nature herself teach us about darkness and light– the shorter days and longer nights in our part of the world remind us there is no blooming of spring, growth of summer or harvest of autumn without the deep underground rest of seeds and roots in the dark of winter. Hope, faith and trust are interwoven in those roots, as they are interwoven in our own.

I’ve shared these words from Krista Tippett often, and have them on a little slip of paper on my fridge to remind me: *Hope, like every virtue, (compassion, trust, faith...) is a choice that becomes a practice that becomes spiritual muscle memory.* Here is the full passage where that quote is found in ***Becoming Wise: An Inquiry Into the Mystery and Art of Living*** in the chapter titled “Hope Reimagined”:

Hope is distinct, in my mind, from optimism or idealism. It has nothing to do with wishing. It references reality at every turn and reveres truth. It lives open eyed and wholehearted with the darkness that is woven [inescapably]...into the light of life and sometimes seems to overcome it. Hope, like every virtue, is a choice that becomes a practice that becomes spiritual muscle memory. It’s a renewable resource for moving through life as it is, not as we wish it to be.”

Hope, unlike optimism, does not rely on an *outcome we can visualize or see*. Hope calls us to remain clear eyed and unflinching as we recognize the shadow in ourselves, and in our collective experience-- and yet still have faith in the **ultimate** goodness that continuously calls us to shine the light of Love into the darkness. There is nothing we experience in our life situation that can’t be used by God. And God IN us, works all things for the good– through us and as us.

The paradox is that our clear-eyed hope— hope as a muscle, hope as a choice and a practice— then also gives us courage to act. Hope becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hope invites us to step in faith, with courage and strength, living in partnership with our

Divine call to BE love in action, to speak our truth with clarity and compassion; to feed the hungry, comfort the afflicted, clothe the naked. To bring healing— as Jesus did— NOW, in this moment, not in some far off imagined time of glory. As always, I know I MUST practice in my own way, nurturing those seeds of hope— it's an inside job of cultivating my power of stillness, of listening, of being present. AND it is only possible for me to cultivate my soul in the company of my beloved community.

This seasonal rhythm of dark days that will soon circle back—as they ALWAYS do— to longer days of sunlight asks us to listen to the wisdom of nature, to the wisdom of a *rhythm of being* that is as old as creation. This gift is ours—available in every moment, no matter how dark— and is the soil that cultivates our deep faith in the ever-present goodness of God at work in us, through us and as us. With hope and faith, we cultivate compassion. With hope and faith, we work for justice and mercy. With hope and faith, we say yes to awakening to our own magnificence, and we bear God's peace and light to the world.

*still this world is born of Goodness,
and grace flourishes even in bad places,
and Love holds us in aching but untiring arms.
Even when the way is not well lit, I live in hope.*

And so it is. Amen!