SUNDAY CIRCLE DECEMBER 7,2025 ADVENT I HOPE

People say:

"I just keep pushing, keep going forward. I refuse to roll up and die."

"Perspective. We are living in one of the best times in history. Start 75 years ago and compare yourself to the average human going back a couple of hundred years ago".

"It's more about finding , over and over and over again, what gives YOU hope. What makes you feel purpose."

"I'm the curious type, and I always want to see what happens next."

"Mostly faith that a higher power is guiding my path. I steer the ship, but other forces influence the path. Somehow always had it.(hope) I just know that everything is going to be alright."

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT HOPE?

NOTABLE QUOTES ABOUT HOPE:

"Listen to the mustn'ts child, listen to the don'ts. Listen to the shouldn'ts, the impossible, the won'ts, listen to the never haves, then listen close to me...Anything can happen child. Anything can be." Shel Silverstein

"You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will live as one." John Lennon

"hold fast to dreams, For if dreams die/ Life is a broken-winged bird,/ that cannot fly." Langston Hughes

"It's really awonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." Anne Frank

Choosing to hope when life is difficult is all about 'rising up in spite of the ache'.

How do we find this in the Holy Scriptures? What is your best loved 'source' of HOPE in the Bible?

Some notable passages:

Romans 4:17,19 : Abraham and Sarah – God made something out of Abraham and Sarah when they were nobodies. God saying to Abraham, 'I will set you up as father of many peoples'. Abraham decided to live in hope, to trust God to do what only God could do: make something out of nothing, a life from an impotent and barren couple. When everything was hopeless, Abraham and Sarah believed anyway, not on the basis of what they could do, but on the basis of what God can do.

WHEN have you believed in the hope of a promise given? By God? By others?

1 Samuel 1:9-18 Hannah and Eli

Hannah suffered years of torment over her barrenness, taunted by her sister wife Penninah, and her husband's inability to understand the depths of her pain. Even when she went to the shrine to pray, in her desperation for a child being willing to give that child up to God, she is rebuked by Eli for her desperate silent prayer and tears. "How long are you going to stay drunk?" She admits her depression but insists she is pouring out her heart to God.

WHEN have you 'poured out your heart to God' feeling no one else could understand, feeling no one else cared?

Choosing to hope is a deliberate decision.

PSALM 38:15 'For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will answer, O Lord my God'.

If we understand the intimacy of our relationship, desired by God our Father/Mother, fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Savior, Brother, Friend, then we can believe that God hears us and expect him in some way to answer us. I chant incessantly the Taize prayer, 'O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me'. I do not expect God to answer in the way I think the answer must be, not Santa Claus, but I trust God cares, God knows me deeply and therefore *wants* to answer me. I pray to be open and attentive to God living in action in bringing me to the best. "For in you, O Lord, I hope; You will answer. O Lord my God." One commentator wrote 'a closed mouth don't get fed'. We don't give God the opportunity to build our faith when we don't offer up prayers for God to answer. Sometimes the answer seems to be NO, sometimes, YES, often, WAIT.

WHEN have you offered up prayers, and waited, perhaps thought even trusting that the answer was NO, only later to look back, and see how miraculously God answered YES?

MARK 5:25-29: The hemorrhaging Woman

"When she heard about Jesus' healing power, she pushed through the crowd and came up from behind him and touched his prayer shawl. For she kept saying to herself, If only I could touch his clothes, I know I will be healed."

I used to be in a choir in Florida, a very charismatic group, we met every Wednesday night. One of the songs we sang which has stayed in my head went "In the face of opposition, all the world

seems dark and grey, and you ponder your position, and you wonder if God cares/ It's not easy for you to praise him when God hasn't answered you, but to praise him in the darkness, brings the answer coming through...Just keep praising Him, praising him, tho' you think you're heart will break, for to praise him in the darkness brings the light". There is a kind of hope that dwells in the grey of pain and despair. When believing gets hard, do we turn away from God or seek God out with more trust? It may feel like it is easier to stop believing, but we can choose as 2 Corinthians %:7 to obey:" We live by what we believe will happen, not by what we can see." Hope gives us courage.

WHEN have you found the courage to keep believing, trusting God even in the darkness?

MATTHEW 20: 29, 32-34 The blind men call out in the crowd

'As they were leaving Jericho, a huge crowd followed. Suddenly they came upon two blind men sitting alongside the road. When they heard it was Jesus passing, they cried out, "Master, have mercy on us! Mercy, Son of David'. The crowd tried to hush them up, but they got even louder, crying, 'Master, have mercy on us! Mercy, Son of David!'

It is hard to maintain hope when surrounded by a crowd, overwhelming numbers of those who belittle or scoff or simply define you as deficient in your hope and faith in God. The voice of doubt makes us all wonder. The voice of pain makes us question. We have to fight for our hope and faith to be louder than our crowded doubts, pain and unbelief, louder than the voices around us. Knowing and reading Holy Scripture can deepen our hope. From the beginning, God has destined us for good, God saves, God desires our well-being always.

WHEN have you had to 'fight the noise of the crowd' to keep hoping in our loving God?

HEBREWS 1:1-2 "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things; through whom he also created the world." The source of our hope is ancient, going back 3000 years, but our hope now is in the Person of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, and was resurrected in glory for our salvation.

HOW can we share our hope in this present day?p