

# *Certain Hope?*



Members of the Anglican Communion in Australia are at present being asked to pray and plan for, “Hope in an Uncertain World”. This is an expression of “Hope 25”, which is being offered as an opportunity, particularly from Easter Day to Pentecost Sunday in 2025, to intentionally share with others the hope we have in Jesus.

We are indeed in an uncertain world. There are unexpected disasters such as the landslide in Papua New Guinea which has buried so many people, wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and the Covid virus which continues to produce new strains, etc.. What has hope to offer in such a context? We might start by noting that hope, like our world, also has a degree of uncertainty, as it concerns the future.

I can hope that the hen, Red, in the nest above, will soon lay an egg. She could be sitting there because she is broody or sick. However, I know that she is neither, and based on her behaviour in the past days and weeks, I can hope with some certainty, that she will soon lay an egg. My hope in her future action tends to be a certain hope, but I do have a slight doubt, as I know she could

just get up and walk off, leaving no egg behind!

Whether we hope for and desire a hen to lay an egg, fine weather tomorrow or to win a lottery, there is an element of doubt or uncertainty in our hope. When we consider Christian or Biblical hope, although it also concerns the future, we can claim it has certainty because it is based on our faith in God.

We can go to Jerusalem and stand in the Garden of Gethsemane, as I have done, but we cannot see and touch the risen body of Jesus as Mary Magdalene did. Nevertheless, our faith in Jesus can still be real, growing in us and giving us a certain hope that develops and deepens.

As Christians, with knowledge of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that God is faithful and can be trusted. These actions of Jesus are expressions of God's love for us and all creation. In 1 Peter 1:3-5, we are told that God has given us, "a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." What we believe also becomes real for us as our loving relationship with Jesus develops.

Examples of the way faith and hope can affect our thoughts and decisions are shown in John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress". This 17th century allegorical story is used to explain the conversations that might take place in our minds as we journey through life on earth on the way to heaven.

Christian, a pilgrim with a burden of sin, is shown by Evangelist the direction he is to go as he begins to travel from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion. His first companion is Faithful. They experience hardships but continually support each other. After Faithful is killed, Hopeful, who was also helped by Faithful, accompanies Christian. Near the end of their journey, Christian and Hopeful arrive at the river of death which they must cross. They enter the water. Christian starts to remember past horrors, his fears return and he begins to sink. Hopeful who feels the ground of faith under his feet, keeps raising Christian's head above the water and reminds him that Jesus Christ is making him whole. Christian reflects silently. Suddenly he calls out in joy, "Oh, I see Him again!" and knows that Jesus is really with them in the river. In the end

both Hopeful and Christian feel the ground of faith under their feet and cross the river safely.

Uncertain hope has nothing much to offer an uncertain world. Certain hope, on the other hand, can assist us and others in our everyday lives, just as Faithful and Hopeful assisted Christian in “The Pilgrim’s Progress”. Such hope, based on faith in God’s love for us, affirms that God does care for us and is ultimately in control of all people and our world. The expectations of hope also encourage us to work to bring about the new life in God’s love that is offered by Jesus Christ to all.

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, Paul writes, “For now there are faith, hope, and love. But of these three, the greatest is love.” Throughout our Christian lives faith and hope are important, but it is love, God’s love or Spirit, that continually comforts us and directs us as how to share God’s love with others.

We, as members of Christ’s body, the Church, have been commanded by Jesus to love others as he has loved us (John 13:34). Jesus loves us by sharing our lives with all their joy, suffering, death, and rising to new life. Therefore we are directed to not only *reveal* God’s love to others, but to *share* it with others. We can do this by giving our lives for them that they might also have faith in a God of love, and experience in our uncertain world a certain hope in a resurrection life lived in God’s love now and forever.

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