

Scripture of Hope

Celebrating the Year of Jubilee
with our Diocesan Writing Team



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle



Scripture of Hope

Introduction by Emma Wynne

Formation & Mission Development Officer



'Let us train ourselves to recognize hope. We will then be amazed at how much good exists in the world. And our hearts will light up with hope. We will then be able to be beacons of the future for those around us.'

— ● —
Pope Francis - 2024
A Light in the Night - Meditations on Hope

Pope Francis wanted the theme of the Jubilee Year 2025 to be dedicated to 'Pilgrims of Hope'. The virtue of Hope is a true gift from God and one Pope Francis explores in his short anthology titled: *A Light in the Night: Meditations on Hope*. In Pope Francis' words, 'To hope is to savor the wonder of being loved, sought, and desired by a God who did not hide in his impenetrable skies but became flesh and blood, history and days, to share our fate.' He also stated that it is our Christian duty to 'cultivate and make fruitful' hope for the good of all.

In response to this Jubilee Year theme of hope, our diocesan writing team were each invited to share a short reflection on a scripture passage which speaks to them of hope throughout the challenges and the joys of life. What follows is a beautiful collection of reflections demonstrating how of the Word of God has been a powerful source of strength, peace and hope to each writer in many different ways.

We are most grateful to all who have shared their Scripture of Hope. Our prayer is that those who read these reflections are renewed in the hope - a gift from God - which can be found in his holy Word.

Pope Francis, 'Introduction' in *A Light in the Night - Meditations on Hope*,
(New York: New City Press, 2024) Kindle E-Book, pp 4-6.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Andy Doyle

St Cuthbert's Parish, Durham



‘When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”’

John 2:3 (ESV-CE)

I have often quipped that the saddest verse of the Bible is voiced by Mary: “They have no wine” (John 2:3). And yet, the clarity and brevity of Mary’s words also tell me something about hope.

Mary has an attentiveness to all that is happening around her at the wedding feast and can see that all is not well. Intense social embarrassment for the bride and groom and their families is knocking at the door as a deeply unwelcome guest. Mary turns to her son and, in solidarity with those for whom disaster looms, she simply states the reality of the situation – without presumption, without conditions, without despair. Her trust is in Jesus, her hope is in him.

Too often in my prayer, I can be careless in discerning what I should pray for but I am, at the same time, tempted to lay out exactly how God should answer! At Cana, Mary sees the need with clarity and expresses it with brevity. If I can see more clearly those situations that need God’s help, and if I can pray for them with simplicity, then perhaps I also can taste the new wine of hope and its fulfilment.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: **Beverley Hallam**

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Chopwell



'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.'

Isaiah 40:31 (ESV-CE)

This powerful promise of strength for those who are exhausted must have lifted the hearts and spirits of the Israelites, who had suffered such hardships for so long during their Babylonian exile. Their spirits as well as their bodies were worn out, almost incapable of refreshment. Did God not care?

But those who hope in the Lord will tap into a supernatural strength from He who cares unceasingly for His weak and helpless children. The words did not promise the Israelites, as they do not promise us, that nothing bad will happen and life will be straightforward. Rather it promises us strength and resilience and renewal of our spirits. A deep strength that will give us the energy to live without weariness no matter how tough our circumstances. And we are promised we will soar like eagles; hope in the Lord will let us rise above our daily concerns and allow us a wider view, rather than becoming bogged down by our own limited vision. Inspiration will give us perseverance so that we carry on without flagging.

This promise, given so long ago but given for all time, tells me if I trust and hope in the Lord He will lift me with his strength. I just need to wait on Him.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Deacon Carl Watson

St Osmund's Parish, Gainford (Darlington Ordinariate)



*'For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon
the earth.'*

Job 19:25 (ESV-CE)

'I know that my Redeemer liveth' is a beautiful aria from Handel's Messiah. I knew it long before I read the book of Job from where the words come.

Despite all of Job's trials and misfortunes he still holds firmly to the belief of God as his Redeemer. In Old Testament times the jubilee year was when those who had fallen on hard times, lost their lands to rich creditors or even ended up in debt slavery, were freed and had all of their family lands returned to them. The 'Goel', was a person of close family who was appointed to redeem the debts and restore land that had been lost. It was very much a homecoming.

St Augustine of Hippo wrote this about the Old Testament, "The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed." So of course, we now see Our Lord as our Redeemer; not from earthly or financial misfortune but in freeing us from bondage to sin and in restoring us to our place in God's family. That is what the Jubilee Year is about and the opportunity it offers to us all.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Christian Smith

St Robert's Parish, Morpeth



'My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.'

Psalm 139:15 (ESV-CE)

***You know me through and through,
from having watched my bones take shape
when I was being formed in secret,
knitted together in the limbo of the womb.***

This psalm is a prayer filled with the wonder of God's wisdom and the assurance of knowing us completely. For a long time, I couldn't reflect on these words because they brought sadness. I lost two babies in pregnancy, the first early in marriage and the second when I was much older. As the psalmist says, they too were being "knitted together in the womb" but that knitting unravelled...

Over time, I have come to see this verse as one of hope for myself and others – that God knows and loves all that is unfinished and incomplete and perhaps this is a great reassurance for ourselves. We are all unfinished products and with God's help and in his time we will become complete.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: David Frank

Holy Family Parish, Hartlepool



*‘ “In my Father’s house are many rooms.
If it were not so, would I have told you
that I go to prepare a place for you?”*

————— ● —————
John 14:2 (ESV-CE)

Hope springs from the heart, even in the darkest hours it is there: God given, Spirit led, it is the yearnings of the heart brought to life through the Lord Jesus. I was involved in RCIA – Journey in Faith for almost forty years and during that time I had many encounters with people who came in the hope that their faith in God was genuine and would lead them into a life-long relationship with Him. Enquirers come from all walks of life; the search for meaning brings them to our doors and it is our responsibility to meet with them and lead them down the path of faith.

I took great comfort from this passage of Scripture. It gave me confidence for, no matter what the background of enquirers, this passage gave a signpost of hope that everyone was called by God. Sometimes people dropped out; often they completed the course, came into the Church, but only lasted a short time. Some stayed, and I see them often coming to the sacraments and thriving in our communities. Each of them, including the dropouts, have a place in my Father’s house and I hope that someday they will find it.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Frances Martin

St Bede's Parish, Jarrow



'For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.'

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV-CE)

What *is* a work of art (handiwork)? There are many definitions. To summarise: something that is the result of skilful, careful creativity and which has high intrinsic value.

At 5 years old, a niece of mine made a large, paper, Christmas tree decoration, of which she was very proud. It was displayed at the front of the family Christmas tree. Now in her mid-30s, she still, admittedly rather jokingly, makes a video call from the other side of the world each year to ensure that it still has pride of place. It doesn't matter that it's now clumsy-looking and dog-eared. It was her work of art and as such will always be highly valued.

Every person is one of a kind. Each of us, in our own unique way, has been fashioned as a reflection of God in the world and each of us has high intrinsic value, simply by being who and what we are, just as God created us.

We are God's work of art.

I am God's work of art.

You are God's work of art.

Wow!



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Frederique Gill

Blessed Edmund Duke Parish (Coxhoe, Sedgefield, Trimdon)



*“O earth, cover not my blood,
and let my cry find no resting-place.
Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
and he who testifies for me is on high.”*

Job 16:14-20 (ESV-CE)

I use the Septuagint Old Testament - Job 16:15-20 - (Brenton's translation). It's poetic. It was the version used in the early centuries of the church and is still used in Greek Orthodox churches today, which Pope John Paul II recognised as the other “lung” of the Church.

We're so lucky to have a saviour who suffered, because it means we never need to be ashamed of our own suffering. We often hear that He who was blameless suffered for our sins. So why do we burden ourselves with shame, and find it so hard to accept that we are blameless when someone else wounds us?

We think we can protect ourselves by being in control, so we say, “I should have done something to avoid this.” But we control very little, and God gives freedom to the just and unjust alike. Even freedom guarantees neither happiness nor safety, it only makes us responsible for our choices.

So my hope is not the utopian fluff of a here-and-now heaven on earth. My hope is in Christ crucified who, although disfigured and reviled, is the innocent lamb who rose up in glory. My hope rests on faith and a personal relationship with God, not on how the world treats us.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: **Gerry Connor**

St Augustine's Parish, Darlington



'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.'

— ● —
Romans 15:13 (ESV-CE)

For me "hope" is founded on the rock of God's promise. Here are just two examples of God answering the above:

1. My dad died from cancer. It came as a shock to the whole family. I remember hearing the news and crying for three days solid. I was walking along the side of the River Tees and, within my grief, I suddenly had a sense of my dad singing with the angels in heaven (he led a choir in Scarborough). I knew in my heart that he was safe and happy with Jesus, fulfilling God's promise of eternal happiness.
2. My daughter discovered, quite by chance when she was in hospital for an operation that she also cancer of the appendix. She was in America at the time. My wife, Anne, and I prayed using words, then the rosary, and then praying in the Spirit. Anne went over and joined Beth in America, and I stayed at home. During that whole time, I had a deep spiritual peace knowing that all would be well and that God had her in the palm of His hand. It was not an easy journey for Beth or Anne, but I knew God's healing hand and was upon her. Since then, she has married and has a wonderful family. Again, God's promise has been fulfilled.

I believe that in both these testimonies the power of the Holy Spirit fulfilled God's promise of peace, joy and hope.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Janet Wallbank

Christ the King Parish, Newcastle



‘And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”’

Luke 19:5 (ESV-CE)

In this story, Zacchaeus, a tax collector, climbed a tree to see Jesus. Nobody would help Zacchaeus because he would have collaborated with the Roman occupiers and, as chief tax collector, forced people to pay more than the Romans requested and pocketed the rest. As a result, he has to climb a tree simply to get a glimpse of Jesus.

When Jesus sees him, he says he will stay at his house. He addresses him, showing compassion, love and acceptance, before Zacchaeus has said he will repay what he owes. While he is still in the tree, Jesus reaches out to him.

This is hopeful because Jesus reaches out to me while I am still in the tree. He doesn't wait until I'm worthy or changed. He seeks me out, promising to stay with me, loving me as I am, regardless of how I've failed. In the face of such unconditional love, Zacchaeus is transformed. When I am spiritually short in stature, I know that Jesus offers me that same love. When I come down from the tree, he will accept me as I am and, by the power of his love, I can begin to grow.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Deacon Jeremy Wynne

Holy Name Parish, Jesmond



“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”

Matthew 18:21-22 (ESV-CE)

‘How often must I forgive...?’

We cannot live together in community without upsetting one another on occasion. Sometimes we may do this by mistake, sometimes deliberately. So being able to forgive is critical in any relationship. Sincere forgiveness strengthens a relationship and leaves it stronger than it was before the offence.

The question posed by Peter to Jesus, was asked in such a way that Peter thought he was being quite generous in his forgiveness. “Should I forgive my brother, sister, friend, neighbour as many as seven times?” he asked.

I suspect Peter thought he knew the answer to his own question. But to his great surprise, Jesus adds to Peter’s generosity in forgiveness in an even greater and deeper way. Not seven but seventy-seven times; to forgive, to forgive again, to keep on forgiving, without limit.

You may think that’s all well and good in theory, but when it comes to daily life it’s much harder to embrace, especially when someone has really hurt us, someone whom we have allowed to be close – a family member, friend, a loved one. And what happens if they hurt us again?

Forgiveness is hard, but in this challenge we learn a simple and yet unchanging truth: God forgives us without limit. The depth of His love for us is limitless.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: **Joe James**

Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish (Backworth, West Monkseaton
& Whitley Bay)



*“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.”*

————— ● —————
Isaiah 43:1-3 (ESV-CE)

Were you ever lost as a child? Do you remember the sense of fear and loneliness, and then the wonderful feeling of relief to hear and recognise the unmistakeable and reassuring voice of your parent calling the name that they had given you – because you belonged to them?

As adults, too, we can feel lost or in danger. The words of Isaiah come to mind when I recall being knocked overboard from a small boat into dangerous water. Oh, the relief and gratitude when eventually somebody got hold of my life jacket and hauled me back aboard, soaking and spluttering! And there was another time when driving (not walking, thank God) through a raging forest fire, with burning trees falling on each side – how much I felt in need of protection. Obviously, I survived both experiences!

Floods and fires are not the scariest things we can experience. Life can throw dreadful emotional challenges at us. I also recall, when feeling spiritually lost and alone, hearing the comforting voice of God the Father (and Mother), saying, “I am near”. Even if we lose sight of Him, He never loses us; but we need to listen.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Julie King

St Augustine's Parish, Darlington



“I will arise and go to my father,”

Luke 15:12-32 (ESV-CE)

Near Leicester Square in the Notre Dame de France on the door of the confessional is a picture of Rembrandt's Prodigal Son. The Father is waiting for me too. Make your way home, He whispers to the empty horizon. Begin, if you like, knee-deep in the pigsty, and then head north, until your blistered feet tread the last few burning miles, when you'll see me running – yes, running – arms outstretched.

He restores dignity and status to the younger son, who might – through baffled, grateful eyes – finally behold the treasure that IS his father. To the elder son, he throws down a loving gauntlet: are you ready to receive all that I want to give you? Whether you are or not, you are with me always.

From the confessional, to the Father, to the Son, I come to live with the question: what kind of man would tell a story like this? A lifelong friendship begins: this man is someone who is in touch with the joy and pain that the senses bring, who sees reality as it is, who knows our hearts, who wants to rescue us repeatedly and who brings us back to the fullness of life.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: **Deacon Patrick Rutherford**

Blessed Edmund Duke Parish (Coxhoe, Sedgfield, Trimdon)



*“I am with you always,
to the end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV-CE)

Jesus has risen from the dead and has appeared several times to his disciples. Having conquered death and no longer bound by limitations of his earthly body, he now exists in the glorified state of the resurrected Lord. His last instruction, as he is about to ascend into heaven, is to give what is known as the Great Commission. The final phrase – “I am with you always, to the end of the age” – brings the Gospel full circle. As prophesied, Jesus was born Emmanuel (“God is with us”) and now this is fulfilled in the risen Christ who promises to always remain with us. Matthew chooses to end his Gospel with the final words of the Great Commission. It is not that he is devaluing the Ascension, but that he wants the emphasis to be on a Christ who lives on within his Church.

I can't help getting emotional when I read or hear these words. My Lord will never leave me, despite my doubts, fears and failures. I'm reminded of the Footprints Prayer and my hope exists in that, when it seems that it is I who is walking alone, it is always the support of my ever-present Lord that carries me through.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: **Kasia Szczepanska**

School Chaplain at St Aidan's Catholic Academy, Sunderland



'and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.'

————— ● —————
2 Kings 13:20-21 (ESV-CE)

I take great comfort in our heritage and traditions, and I believe this passage marks the beginning of the Catholic practice of venerating relics – it moves me to action.

At the end of March, I visited the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis. The experience deeply moved me. I always read about the saints whose relics I venerate; the time spent in prayer offers a beautiful opportunity to reflect on their lives, be inspired, and feel grateful.

After venerating Carlo's relic, I felt God's grace. I left the church feeling peaceful, joyful, and full of the Holy Spirit – ready for another day of missionary discipleship. As I walked out, a friend gave me an unexpected hug. Though we weren't particularly close, I was touched by the gesture. My heart rejoiced. I felt loved. I believe that was my miracle – a simple, powerful sign of God's abundant love.

Later, I reflected on Carlo's words: "We are all born original, but most die as photocopies." That day, I was affirmed that the original I was born as is the one God delights in.

I am just a Pilgrim of Hope, walking through Scripture, saints, and sacred places – grateful for God's endless love and mercy.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Laura Young

St John XXIII Parish, Washington



'And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.'

Luke 4:1-13 (ESV-CE)

When I received the invitation to write a reflection and saw that I needed to use my own choice of Scripture, I panicked a little. I'm not great with Scripture and I feel my faith is more of a spiritual feeling. But I had also promised myself that in 2025 I would focus more on Scripture.

So, whilst on my own little scriptural quest, I reflected about our year of celebration, Lent and my relationship with my faith and how Jesus was tempted by the devil and that we all have metaphorical devils. As well as my promise to focus on Scripture, for Lent I decided to give up sweet treats. I'm ten days in writing this and haven't broken my promise. But I have learned that my devil is my husband. He's a kind man, but he is also the one who has tested my promise the most. "Oh, have a treat, don't be so hard on yourself!"

I know he is coming from a place of love and he doesn't want me missing out. It's not easy and I would love to at times. But in this Gospel passage, Jesus is tested and it makes me realise how small my temptations are and how huge those of Jesus were. I do not carry the strength that Jesus carried, but Jesus' example of 'rising above temptation' gives me strength to follow my own small promises. Jesus' life should be an inspiration to us all on how we live and how we treat others.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Pat Kennedy

St Cuthbert's Parish, Kenton, Newcastle



*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born
I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”*

Jeremiah 1:5, 17-19 and 29: 7-14 (ESV-CE)

Life at home was not easy for me as a child. I blamed myself; obviously I wasn't a loveable child, and I was convinced that God felt the same way about me – so I hid! I ticked the box by attending church every Sunday and eventually I married and had four children. I had my own home – free from my mother. Responsible for myself, I could choose where I spent my time – I survived – I was my own saviour; until I collapsed – a breakdown. All fell apart!

I met a priest who introduced me to the Bible and told me to pray and use it to help me. I came upon an article which was about Mature Faith:

1. God has a plan.
2. You are part of His plan.
3. Find your place in the plan.
4. Find someone to support you.

Somehow, I reached for the Bible and opened it. It was Jeremiah 1:13: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

These words, and those which followed, touched me to my deepest being. I changed – I was called – and I walked the road of Jeremiah.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Rachael Blackburn

St Gregory's Parish, South Shields



'And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.'

1 Kings 19:11-14 (ESV-CE)

This is my favourite passage from scripture. The prophet Elijah is in despair as he feels he is alone. In reality, he is far from being alone, but he does not see the bigger picture. God tells Elijah to go and stand on the mountain. Elijah is about to have a personal encounter with God, and we learn so much about God through this event. Just look at what passes by on the mountain – a hurricane, an earthquake and fire. All these show great power and immense strength. Yet, God is not in these. God is in a gentle breeze.

It is the experience of this gentleness that Elijah goes out to meet God. How often do we look for the loudness of something? If we struggle with our faith in God, we may ask for God to send us a sign that we can take notice of. Potentially, we are looking in the wrong places. We should be looking for God in the simplest ways. We should be listening to God in the lives of others. We should trust in God and realise we are never alone.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: **Rebecca Leighton**

St Mary's Church, Sunderland University Catholic Chaplaincy



“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

Matthew 14:22-33 (ESV-CE)

This scripture passage has long been my favourite. The disciples are terrified in the boat as the storm rages. They see no way out and feel this could be the end. They are losing hope. In the distance however, they suddenly see a figure on the water. Their fear becomes greater, they think it is a ghost. But Jesus reassures them: “Courage! It’s me! Don’t be afraid.”

During my own times of despair and hopelessness, I reflect on this story, remembering how Jesus eases the fear in the disciples’ hearts. Not only does he do this, but he also invites Peter onto the water when he doubts that it is Jesus. Peter is hesitant to step out but he puts his trust in Jesus and is able to also walk on the water. He walks towards Jesus but then the wind picks up, he becomes frightened again and he starts to sink. This can happen to us in our own lives. We take our eyes off Jesus; we can lose hope and trust and can feel ourselves sinking under the weight of the things going on in the world around us. But just as Jesus was there to pull Peter out from the water, he is also there to pull us out of our own difficulties, insecurities and hardships.

In this Jubilee Year of hope, we must learn from Peter’s experience and remember to not take our eyes off the Lord. In difficult times, He is always our unmoveable rock, our steadfast hope.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Sr M. Francis

Oaklea Convent, Sunderland



*'Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God.'*

Psalm 42:11 (ESV-CE)

My chosen Scripture text for this reflection on “pilgrims of hope” is, happily enough, part of a psalm of pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple! This verse has encouraged me all my life from the time, as a child, I first came across it, in Latin, at what was known as the Dialogue Mass, to this year when Pope Francis declared 2025’s theme to be “Pilgrims of Hope”.

I'm very aware that I'm a pilgrim. I'm journeying through life to my final (I hope, heavenly) destination, and while I've not always enjoyed the trip, and a couple of times have felt like giving up, I know that each day brings me nearer to my goal: “My Saviour and my God”.

For it is hope that has kept me on the right path: “Hope in God”. When faced with little problems, this prayer has come to my lips; when I have had to get through harder times, the psalmist's words have urged me on. And I'm not just reciting a magic formula – my hope in God has not been in vain. He has given me, over and over again, reason to “praise him still” and has helped me to keep on keeping on.

This pilgrim, Lord, thanks you for the gift of hope. Amen!



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Sr Michael

Convent of Mercy, Sunderland



“Be still, and know that I am God;”

Psalm 46:10 (ESV-CE)

This psalm, originally, was an encouragement to the Hebrews facing natural disasters and war, to trust that God was their refuge and strength. It is a timely reminder today, in the midst of confusion, warfare, injustice and unimaginable suffering, that God is in control, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving.

On a personal level, I have returned to this verse again and again – in times of uncertainty, disappointment, sorrow, desolation, even unbelief. After years of unanswered prayer, I have learned there are some things that can't be mended so let God be in charge: let God be God.

The popular hymn based on this verse is helpful for prayer. 'I am the Lord that healeth thee': so show him your wounds and feel his touch. It continues, 'In thee O Lord, I put my trust': do this in surrender and acceptance.

Another way I pray this verse and rest in hope, is to reduce it gradually and linger meditatively on each phrase:

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know

Be still

Be

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Sr Paschaline Okolo

Our Lady Immaculate and St Cuthbert Parish, Crook



*“Fear not, stand firm,
and see the salvation of the Lord,”*

————— ● —————
Exodus 14:5-29 (ESV-CE)

Have you ever pondered on the Israelites' wilderness-journey to the promised land at that very critical, challenging moment when the Egyptian armies fiercely pursued and overtook them, while they camped by the Red Sea; a situation needing urgent intervention but humanly speaking, no possible solution at hand? And can you imagine the helplessness, anguish and feelings of horror? But then again, notice what happened there-and-then: the Lord showed up through Moses and the untold miracle took place at the Red Sea.

Is there anyone out there trapped in any difficult, devastating or despairing situation? Then I say to you, “Courage!” Journey through this scripture passage in faith, maybe you will see reasons again to keep trusting and just remember: the same God who performed at the Red Sea is still alive today and forever, much closer to us than we can ever imagine.

I must admit that I feel deeply anytime I turn to this passage – I mean feelings sated with inner joy and contentment – for it has become an anchor of hope in my difficult or obscure moments. Yes, I trust in the God, who showed up at the Red Sea. So, do not be afraid, stand firm and see the Lord's deliverance.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Sr Sheila McNamara rscj

Society of the Sacred Heart, Newcastle



*'fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,'*

Isaiah 41:10 (ESV-CE)

I have heard that the words 'Do not be afraid' appear 365 times in Scripture. One for each day of the year. I am not sure this is true, but, either way, this is a quote I return to often. I find these words bring tremendous hope, comfort and support. They have been put to music in various hymns and these are also one of my go-to places in times of uncertainty, fear, loss, anxiety, worry.

I remember just before a major surgery feeling vulnerable and scared, being able to sing silently within me an Iona version of the words: 'Don't be afraid, my love is stronger than your fear.' I was able to hold on to hope and courage. In a time of family bereavement, feeling lost, distressed, fearful, these words came to me as gift helping me know I was held in love despite the darkness of grief.

My image of God when I pray this quote and imagine leaning in to him is Compassionate God, God of Gentleness, Listening God, Enfolding God. How might these words of hope help you in daily life or reflect on how they have brought hope in the past?

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Sue Oxley

St Mary's Parish, Cullercoats



'For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler [...]. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge;'

Psalm 91:3-4 (ESV-CE)

The snare of the fowler is a ring of cord, lying unseen on the riverbank, and when a bird steps a foot into the ring the fowler, hidden in the bushes, pulls the snare tight. The bird cannot escape no matter how it screams and attempts to fly. Its life is out of its control, its death is certain, its struggle pulls closer the means of its destruction.

How easy it was to carelessly step into that snare, that trap of evil, made not of cord but of alcohol, heroin, fentanyl, lust, gambling, food, pornography, violence, abusive relationships. I had my cord, you pick yours – whatever has held you fast, incredibly tight, preventing escape as it destroys. As children of Adam, we all have our own personal snares of destruction.

But how good is the Most High, who releases us as He hacks away at the snare when we finally scream at Him, "Help me, I can't escape, I can't do this on my own."

And then how wonderful it is to live in that peace and freedom, under His wings, in the soft feathers of His love.

His mercy has delivered us back to ourselves. How good is God.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Suzanne Lewis-Dale

St Mary's Parish, Cullercoats



*“Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord
has risen upon you.”*

Isaiah 60:1-3 (ESV-CE)

I love this passage. It is about Joy and hope. It comes after the birth of Jesus. The hope this bring to us all. Christ is often referred to as light, light of the world. I believe we can find hope and light in other places in our life, where God shines through others.

I love the idea of always being able to find light in the dark. This made me think about times when I have had to find light in the dark. As we journey through life there may be changes and challenges, a lost loved one, a change in job, struggling relationships.

Through these challenges I believe we can find hope if we look for the light.

It can be found in many different places. I find the light at the school I work in, through staff, through students, through our community.

I find light in my family and friends, walks along the coast, chats over cups of tea.

I find light in Evangeline, my dog. Always happy to see me.

Our faith is like this, leading us when it is dark, showing us hope.

I invite you to think about where you found light in others.

Click on the link to read the full scripture passage (English Standard Version) via www.biblegateway.com.



Scripture of Hope

Reflection written by: Trisha Tindall

St Mary's Parish, Forest Hall



*'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.'*

Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV-CE)

Many years ago, our daughter gave us a photo frame with the words, 'For I know the plans I have for you.' In 2023 we were required to relocate many miles away and having already sold our own house our seller chose not to sell on the day of exchange. We quickly had to redirect our furniture to a storage facility and subsequently had to rely on short term holiday rents for 5 months with our young spaniel in tow. That frame, which always travelled with us, was profoundly significant.

Every day I reflected upon these words and in my weaker moments I would often respond, "Well, you could tell us what those plans are." I had the *hope* that our future would reveal itself but was longing for a timeframe.

During those months, I learnt to rely on the prayers of others, not to change the situation, but to give us the strength to face numerous and unrelenting hurdles. We were uplifted by these prayers in a way that it is difficult to explain yet we know they constantly carried us. The same daughter that gave us the frame one day said, "Mum, let me hold your hope in my hands, until you are ready to take it back again." Through our tears, she taught us that hope comes in many different ways, and that God always provides a channel for that hope.

Whilst God's plans are not always visible to us, our future and hope are in his hands and therefore we need to put our trust and faith in him and gratefully draw upon the many gifts of sustenance he has provided for us on our sometimes very difficult journey.



References and Copyright

Pope Francis, 'Introduction' in A Light in the Night - Meditations on Hope, (New York: New City Press, 2024) Kindle E-Book, pp 4-6.

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