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# THE OASIS

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## Hope

BY REV. LIZ NICKERSON

"...hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."  
Romans 8:24b

It is spring the season of new beginnings! What are your hopes for 2022? This Scripture reminds us that hope that is seen is not hope. This is an important reminder, we don't hope for what we already have. Waiting with hope takes patience and it takes time. We are all weary of the pandemic. Weary of another season when we have to wear masks and keep waiting for life to get back to normal. But we can't put life on hold and so we need to keep living. We need to creatively and safely keep connecting with God, our families and our church. We might need to modify our plans but we need to keep planning, keep pursuing, and keep building God's kingdom. I have often thought lately of what it was like to live in medieval Europe during the plague. The plague ravaged Europe for 7 years and killed over 75 million people. During the plague there were no vaccines, and treatments. People had to put their faith and hope in God to get through it and they did. It's hard to believe how bad it was during the plague. We are in the midst of a plague now, although not nearly as catastrophic. So, don't lose hope! Picture and pray for the world to be healed. Ask God what he needs from you this year. Write down your hopes for 2022. This year can still be the best year that you have ever had. You can grow, closer to God, your family and your church. You can make a real difference in the lives of someone else. You can let God use you, fill you, and strengthen you. Remember, when Christ's hour was darkest, the resurrection happened. Christ conquered death for all times and all places. As Christians hope is in our DNA! We are people of hope! "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1 Let's face 2022 as people of hope!

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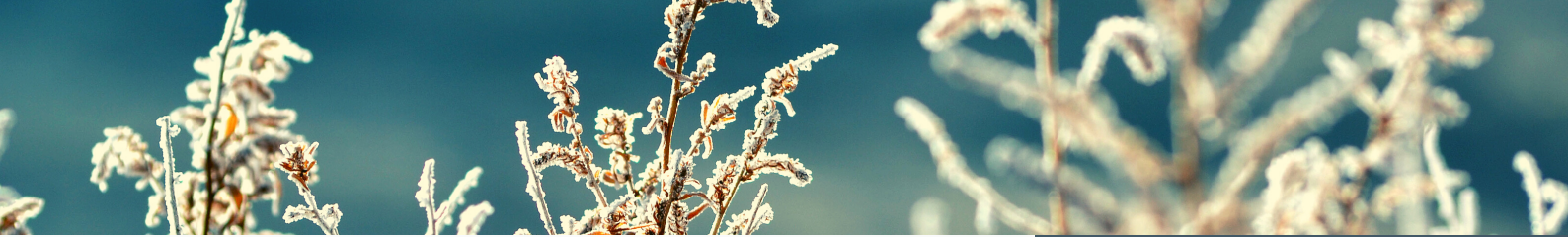
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## Mystical Hope

‘Cynthia Bourgeault explores the idea that mystical hope is something that arises from within us, not as a result of our own effort, but as a fruit of our ability to consciously abide in what she calls “the Mercy” of God. Bourgeault writes:

We ourselves are not the source of that [mystical] hope; we do not manufacture it. But the source dwells deep within us and flows to us with an unstinting abundance, so much so that in fact it might be more accurate to say we dwell within it. . . . The term I will use to describe this embodying fullness is “the Mercy.” It is the water in which we swim. Mercy is the length and breadth and height and depth of what we know of God—and the light by which we know it. You might even think of it as the Being of God insofar as we can possibly penetrate into it in this life, so that it is impossible to encounter God apart from the dimension of mercy. . . . The mercy of God . . . is unconditional—always there, underlying everything. It is literally the force that holds everything in existence, the gravitational field in which we live and move and have our being. . . . Mercy is God’s innermost being turned outward to sustain the visible and created world in unbreakable love. . . .

Mystical hope would simply be what happens when we touch this innermost ground [within our own selves] and it floods forth into our being as strength and joy. Hope would be the Mercy—divine love itself—coursing through our being like lightning finding a clear path to the ground. . . . In this new positioning, the underlying sense of corporateness [oneness] is physically real, for that “electromagnetic field of love” is the Mercy—and the Mercy is the body of Christ. Through this body hope circulates as a lifeblood. It warms, it fills, it connects, it directs. It is the heart of our own life and the heart of all that lives.

Hope’s home is at the innermost point in us, and in all things. It is a quality of aliveness. It does not come at the end, as the feeling that results from a happy outcome. Rather, it lies at the beginning, as a pulse of truth that sends us forth. When our innermost being is attuned to this pulse it will send us forth in hope, regardless of the physical circumstances of our lives. Hope fills us with the strength to stay present, to abide in the flow of the Mercy no matter what outer storms assail us. It is entered always and only through surrender; that is, through the willingness to let go of everything we are presently clinging to. And yet when we enter it, it enters us and fills us with its own life—a quiet strength beyond anything we have ever known.

Cynthia Bourgeault, *Mystical Hope: Trusting in the Mercy of God* (Cowley Publications: 2001), 20–21, 25, 34, 86–87.



## A Prayer for Hope

As the sun rises on our day, may Your light dawn on our hearts. Reveal your character and goodness to us as we put our hope in You. Amen.

For as the  
heavens reach  
beyond earth  
and time, we  
swim in mercy  
as in an  
endless sea.

PSALM 103:11







## Unshakable Hope

Could you use some unshakable hope? If so, you are not alone. We live in a day of despair. The suicide rate in America has increased 24 percent since 1999. Twenty-four percent! If a disease saw such a spike, we would deem it an epidemic. How do we explain the increase? We've never been more educated. We have tools of technology our parents could not have dreamed of. We are saturated with entertainment and recreation. Yet more people than ever are orchestrating their own deaths. How could this be?

Among the answers must be this: people are dying for lack of hope. Secularism sucks the hope out of society. It reduces the world to a few decades between birth and hearse. Many people believe this world is as good as it gets, and let's face it. It's not that good.

But People of the Promise have an advantage. They determine to ponder, proclaim, and pray the promises of God. They are like Abraham who "didn't tiptoe around God's promise asking cautiously skeptical questions. He plunged into the promise and came up strong" (Rom. 4:20 The Message). They filter life through the promises of God. When problems surface, they can be heard telling themselves, "But God said . . ." When struggles threaten, they can be seen flipping through Scripture, saying, "I think God said something about this." When comforting others, they're prone to ask, "Do you know God's promise on this topic?"

The promises of God serve as an apothecary shelf of remedies. Just as the doctor might prescribe a medication for your body, God has given promises for your heart. He shares them as gifts from friend to friend. "Friendship with God is reserved for those who reverence him. With them alone he shares the secrets of his promises" (Ps. 25:14 TLB). For every problem in life God has given us a promise. Make it your aim to get so acquainted with these promises that you can write yourself a prescription.

- I'm feeling fearful today. Time for me to open up a bottle of Judges 6:12: "The Lord is with you." I will lay claim to the nearness of God.
- The world feels out of control. Time for a dose of Romans 8:28: "All things work together for good" (NKJV).
- I see dark clouds on the horizon. What was it Jesus told me? Oh, now I remember: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Excerpt from Max Lucado, *Unshakable Hope - Building our Lives on the Promises of God* (Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2018) pages 10-11.

## Reading Suggestions

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS:

"It will be Okay - Trusting God through fear and change" by Lysa TerKeurst, illustrated by Natalia Moore  
 "Little Mole Finds Hope" by Glenys Nellist illustrated by Sally Garland  
 "Easter Love Letters from God" by Glenys Nellist illustrated by Sophie Allsopp  
 "The Donkey Who Carried A King" by R.C. Sproul illustrated by Chuck Groenink.

### ADULT BOOKS:

"Mystical Hope" - Cynthia Bourgeault  
 "Unshakable Hope" - Max Lucado  
 "Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times" - Bishop Micheal Curry  
 "Reason for Hope" - Jane Goodall  
 "Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul" - J. Philip Newell  
 "An Altar in the World" - Barbara Brown Taylor







## "Hope" is the thing with the Feathers

By Emily Dickinson

Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

Emily Dickinson, "Hope" is the Thing with Feathers" from The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University press, Copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.



## The Peace of Wild Things

By Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry, "The Peace of Wild Things" from The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry. Copyright © 1998. Published and reprinted by arrangement with Counterpoint Press.



## Isaiah 40:31

"but those who hope  
in the Lord will renew  
their strength. They  
will soar on wings  
like eagles; they will  
run and not grow  
weary, they will walk  
and not be faint."