

Hope

Hope is the word which God has written on the brow of every man.

—Victor Hugo

The history of the Hebrew people is surely a history of hope. While small in number, the Hebrew people survived overwhelming odds and accomplished impossible things. They held fast to hope no matter their condition—in captivity, in wandering, and in exile. Why? Because they continued to believe in the covenant promises God had made with them. They trusted that God would act on their behalf and fulfill all those promises. The psalmist shares the strength that hope gave to the Hebrews:

Hallelujah!
 Praise the Lord, my soul; I shall praise the Lord all my life,
 sing praise to my God while I live.
 I put no trust in princes, in mere mortals powerless to save. . . .
 Happy those whose help is Jacob’s God, whose hope is in the Lord, their God,
 The maker of heaven and earth, the seas and all that is in them,
 Who keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed,
 gives food to the hungry.
 The Lord sets prisoners free; the Lord gives sight to the blind.
 The Lord raises up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.
 The Lord protects the stranger, sustains the orphan and the widow,
 but thwarts the way of the wicked.
 The Lord shall reign forever, your God, Zion, through all generations!
 Hallelujah!
 —Psalm 146:1-3, 5-10

- What were some of the covenant promises God made to the Hebrews?
- What was the Hebrews’ greatest hope?



St. Augustine said, “Of the three theological virtues, hope is the greatest.”

- Faith puts us in touch with God.
- Love unites us with the goodness of God.
- Hope places us on the path toward God.



Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.
 Hope is a passion for the impossible.

- What seems impossible for you?
- Describe how hope energizes you to reach for the impossible and to make a difference.

A decorative border of black leaf silhouettes on a white background, framing the central text.

An Act of Hope

For your mercies' sake, O Lord my God,
tell me what you are to me.
Say to my soul: "I am your salvation."
Speak that I may hear, O Lord;
my heart is listening;
open it that it may hear you.
Say to my soul: "I am your salvation."
After hearing this word,
may I come in haste to take hold of you.
Hide not your face from me.
Let me see your face even if I die,
lest I die with longing to see it.
The house of my soul is too small to receive you;
let it be enlarged by you.
It is all in ruins; do you repair it.
There are things in it—I confess and I know—
that must offend your sight.
But who shall cleanse it?
Or to what others besides you shall I cry out?
From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord,
and from those of others spare your servant.
Amen.

—St. Augustine

The House of Christmas

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.

The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay on their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.

Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam;
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost—how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

—G. K. Chesterton

What Are the Gospels?

First of all, what the Gospels *are not*. They are not simple biographies that invite us to read about Jesus and admire him. The Gospels summon us to pay attention to him, to believe in him, and to follow him.

The Gospels are. . .

- proclamations of Good News
- encounters with that Good News—Jesus himself
- challenges to believe

Read each of the Gospel passages below.

- Describe what image the evangelist uses to portray Jesus.
- Express the Good News.
- Then, describe how the person in the passage responded to Jesus.

Mark 1:40-42

Image of Jesus & the Good News

Response of the healed man

Luke 10:38-42

Image of Jesus & the Good News

Response of Mary

Mark 8:27-30

Image of Jesus & the Good News

Response of Peter



Jesus challenged his listeners to believe and to make a commitment. Today, the Gospels continue to challenge us to believe in Jesus and to follow him. Read each of the Gospel passages below.

- Describe what you think it challenges you to believe about Jesus.
- Finally, describe how you could meet that challenge.

John 20:24-29

The challenge

My response

Luke 6:37-42

The challenge

My response
