

Pat Helin shared some words from the writings of Henri Nouwen. She added questions: What does BOLD HOPE mean to you? How do you live it? How do you share it?

Wishing To Hoping

We live in a world where people don't know much about hope. We know about wishes. The whole Christmas period is full of wishes. I wish this, or I want that. It's very concrete: I want a toy or a car or a new job. These are all very specific requests. But hope is precisely to say, "I don't know how God is going to fulfill his promises, but I know that he will, and therefore I can live in the present with the knowledge that he is with me."

I can then know and trust that the deepest desires of my being will be fulfilled. This way keeps the future very open. It's not a controlling kind of thing; it's not saying, "I want to sure I have all these things in place when I get there." It's not the anxious, controlling, nervous ego wondering if it will have enough to survive.

Hope has nothing to do with optimism. Many people think that hope is optimism, looking at the positive side of life. But Jesus doesn't speak like that at all. When Jesus talks about the future or the end of the world, he describes wars, people in anguish, nation rising against nation, and earthquakes. There's no place where Jesus says, "One day it will be all wonderful." He talks about enormous agony, he says: You, you [my beloved ones] pray unceasingly that you will keep your heart focused on me. Stand with you head erect in the presence of the Son of Man. Don't be distracted by it all. Remain focused." Don't think that things will clean up, and finally there won't be any more pain. Jesus is saying that the world is dark and will remain dark.

[But] if you live with hope, you can live very much in the present because you can nurture the footprints of God in your heart and life. You already have a sense of what is to come. And the whole of the spiritual life is saying that God is right with us, right now. So that we can wait for his coming, and this waiting is a waiting in hope. But because we wait with hope we know that what we are waiting for is already here. We have to nurture that.

Here and now matters because God is a God of the present. And God is God of the present because he is God of eternity.

Hope is to open yourself up to let God do his work in you in ways that transcend your own imagination. As Jesus said, “When you were young you put your belt on and went where you wanted to go. But when you grow spiritually old, then you stretch out your hands and let others and God lead you where you rather wouldn’t go (John 21:18). That’s hope, to let yourself be led to new places. (THN)