

Why Do I Have Hope?

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People often ask me, *why do you have hope?* They ask it as if hope were natural. As if it were easy. As if it were untouched by loss.

I answer them as a Palestinian, as a Lutheran pastor, as someone who has walked closely with misery and despair—not as theory, but as lived reality.

Hope did not come to me because life was kind. ...Hope came to me because despair was very real.

I have seen what prolonged injustice does to the human spirit. I have stood with families whose homes were taken. I have listened to parents explain to their children why fear has become part of everyday life. I know what it means to feel that the future is shrinking. And it is precisely from this place that I choose hope.

Not because I am naïve, but because I am faithful....Our faith is not built on denial. It is built on a God who enters suffering. A God who refuses to remain distant.

The resurrection does not erase the cross. It comes through it.

Jesus says, *“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*

Not someday. Not after suffering is over. But life—here, now, in the midst of broken reality.

This is the heart of our Lutheran confession: God meets us not first in power, but in weakness. Not first in triumph, but in the cross.

This is why hope, for me, is not an emotion. It is a decision.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing from prison under a brutal regime, confessed that he believed God could bring good even out of evil, and that God does not give us everything we desire, but what we need to live responsibly.

This is not cheap hope. This is hope born in confinement, in resistance, in costly faith.

And this is the hope I recognize. Hope is waking up knowing that today may bring humiliation, delay, or loss—
and still choosing to live fully.

It is the student who studies without guarantees. The teacher who teaches without certainty. The parent who plans for a future the system tries to erase.

This is not passive survival. This is resurrection practiced daily.

Paul speaks of the *already but not yet*. For us, this is not abstract theology. It is lived reality. We already experience life— in community, in laughter, in stubborn joy.

But we also know life is not yet whole. Justice is not yet fulfilled. Freedom is not yet realized. Hope lives in this tension.

What gives me hope is not the absence of suffering, but the refusal to let suffering have the final word. I see hope when young people hold hands, teach children, play and sing while rubble still surrounds them.

I see hope when families gather on the ruins of their homes, light a fire, share food, and sing— because they know something deeply theological:

Death is not defeated by death. Death is defeated by life.

The culture of death tells us: *This is normal. Accept it.*

Faith responds: *No. This is not God's will—and we will not surrender.*

Theology matters. But theology that does not walk with the wounded betrays the Gospel.

God did not look at our misery and turn away. God entered it. God chose to dwell among the poor, the occupied, the crucified of history.

Bonhoeffer believed that even in dark times, God calls us not to resignation, but to responsible life. And this is the challenge before us.

Hope is not something to admire. It is something to join. Hope means choosing to build when demolition is policy. Hope means planting trees when uprooting has become routine.

Hope means educating, healing, loving, and organizing life when despair is constantly offered as the only option.

So I ask you:

Do not romanticize hope. Do not turn it into a slogan.

Hope asks something of you. It asks you to stand where it is uncomfortable. To listen where pain is inconvenient. To choose life—not only in words, but in practice.

Join us—not in pity, but in partnership.

Walk with us in the long march toward life in its fullness.

Choose peace that resists injustice. Love that refuses hatred. Life that defies death.

This is why I have hope.

Not because the night is short, but because the morning is promised.

As long as people wake up and choose life— as long as trees are planted, children are taught, and songs are sung even among the ruins— hope will not die.

So today, I ask you: Do not applaud hope. Stand with it.

Do not admire hope from a distance. Walk with it.

Choose life— where death expects silence.

Choose life— where despair claims the last word.

And together, let us prove— with our lives— that hope is stronger.