

Discovering Hope Again
Jeremiah 33:14-16
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
November 28, 2021
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Rev. Marilyn Fiddmont, a Disciples pastor from Texas, in reflecting on how difficult 2020 had already been and then how the murder of George Floyd was just that one last blow she couldn't take, said this: *I had been the owner of a peculiar thing called hope. Held onto it. It's been one of my prized possessions. The Waterford crystal of my spirituality is this thing called hope. But on that day, one person who looked like me and my family, one black person too many in an act barbaric beyond reason, too much, too many, too long, made me wonder if it was really inconvenient to walk around in a black body. So I grabbed my prized possession...I grabbed my hope and I smashed it, travertine floor smashed it into a thousand meaningless slivers of glass. In every corner of my home, I smashed it. I swept it up, all that was visible. I just swept it all up. I used a damp cloth, damp from my own tears and went around the edges. Oh the folly and foolishness of hope. I said, "Hope, I'm done with you, and your kind." Thursday was trash day so I put all my hope in my barrels with the rotting food, the torn paper, this thing of fairy tales, this childhood wishes thing, this dead prophet dreaming thing. "Leave me alone," I said to it, "you've teased and tricked and toyed with me too many times. Be gone. Banish yourself from my sight, foolish hope."* ([Care of Your Spiritual Self- w/ Rev. Marilyn Fiddmont - pensionfund \(wistia.com\)](#))

Have you ever been ready to banish hope?

Have you ever felt like smashing it on the floor because it's promises seemed like lies and the possibilities to which you held started to look like nothing more than wishes, than smoke and mirrors?

Maybe it was in the days when you desperately needed contact, a hug, a hand to hold, and yet loneliness was your only companion. This last year and a half, we've known a lot of that. But not only then. Loneliness has known how to weave its way in for generations.

Maybe hope has gotten kicked out of your house with the pink slip, the eviction notice, the flicker of the lights at the deadline of an overdue bill. When all of your effort has simply not been enough, maybe hope has been kicked to the curb.

Or maybe it's been in watching one more person who looked like you or someone you love being mistreated, even killed because of the color of their skin. Maybe it's been in experiencing one more rejection because you loved someone of the same gender or because you were willing to voice that you never felt at home in your own body. Maybe that's when your relationship with hope became tenuous at best.

Maybe it hasn't even been something you would call that significant, maybe not in a single life changing event or in the midst of trauma, but maybe you have slowly, day by day, stress after stress, in watching the division and the struggle and the hardship around you...maybe one moment at a time, you've lost sight of hope.

Friends, sometimes we need a space to name this reality. Sometimes we need to feel safe enough to turn to our neighbor and say that we are struggling to feel hope, to choose hope, to hold on to hope. Because when we get there, we usually feel alone. And we often feel ashamed. We feel like we've done something wrong.

And yet we are reminded time and time again, in scripture and the stories of people of faith across the centuries, that many people have lost sight of hope.

It happened to the people of Israel. Here in this passage from the prophet Jeremiah, the people were in exile. They had watched as their land was taken over. They had watched as their temple was destroyed. They had watched as their neighbors were moved out of their homes to a foreign land and then they had heard the knock at their door when they were the next to go. They knew what it was for their identity to be torn apart, to be in question, for their sense of self, so deeply connected to place and community, to be shattered.

And into this reality came the voice of the prophet saying, "The days are surely coming..."

Into this reality came a vision of hope...inevitably one that not everyone could grasp that first day, but one that someone was able to catch and that someone else was able to wonder about and that someone else was able to allow to ease its way into their life. And, little bit, by little bit, they found their hope again.

The same thing happened with Rev. Fiddmont whose words I shared earlier. No matter how hard she tried to throw away what she had previously known as "the Waterford crystal of her spirituality," it never fully went away. What she discovered was that hope was not so easy to let go of. She reflected saying: *The danger of this thing called hope is that once it has occupied a space and taken root, become a companion, it becomes a tenacious, unwielding dandelion in the spiritual garden.* ([Care of Your Spiritual Self- w/ Rev. Marilyn Fiddmont - pensionfund \(wistia.com\)](#))

Rev. Fiddmont went on saying: *Hope has been burned at the stake and the righteousness of God still proclaimed. It has been chained and brutalized, shackled, muzzled...hope has been gas chambered, it's been incinerated, leaving trails of tears and rivers by which people went down singing. Hope has been interned in camps, walled off along borders, robbed of native languages, reserved in places in which most of us would rather not find ourselves dead. Hope took a respectful knee and then lost her career in order to call attention to disparity and injustice. It has been macheted like stalks of sugar cane with acts of genocide. Hope has been raped and looted and pillaged by bigotry, it's been strangled by prejudice, it's been sucker-punched by*

homophobia, xenophobia, sexism and ageism. It's been the victim of war crimes against nature and humanity. Been lynched by lies, pulverized by stones of greed. It's been bloodied, dazed, damaged and wobbly.

Rev Fiddmont went on saying: *It struggles to its feet. It's Joe Frazier and Mohammad Ali, 15 rounds of heavy weights and yet it still stands. It still rises like Maya Angelou wrote, "like air it rises." Baby's fledging steps, an annoying twinkle in the eye of the elders - it's hope. Bravery in the face of danger, steadfastness in the face of opposition. Hope is positive action in the face of resistance, optimism in the face of despair. It laughs at a sense of self-power, privilege and shakes the foundations of society until justice rolls and rivers flow. That is hope....Hope is courage that is the result of fear having said its prayers. ([Care of Your Spiritual Self- w/ Rev. Marilyn Fiddmont - pensionfund \(wistia.com\)](#))*

And as Rev. Fiddmont experienced, hope called again and she said: *Hope called again from that word that was in the beginning and became flesh, and moved into our neighborhoods and our ghettos and our barrios and our mansions and our palaces. Kept saying, "I gotta go hope them."...and it found its way back into my space. It found its way back into my voice and my body and my being. ([Care of Your Spiritual Self- w/ Rev. Marilyn Fiddmont - pensionfund \(wistia.com\)](#))*

Friends, hope is one of the gifts of Advent. And if you are not quite ready for hope, then space to entertain the possibility is one of the gifts of Advent. Because hope never really goes away. We may not feel it. We may struggle to sign on to it. But it is rooted in the story of our faith...it has taken wings and is singing a tune around us...it is at the heart of the Christmas story, a story where God's love takes up residence in our lives and will not go away.

Advent has come and with it the opportunity to share hope if your commitment to it feels strong...and if not, Advent says you can acknowledge that, too and maybe, just maybe, in this season you can discover hope again. May it be so.