

First Week of Advent 2015 with FBC Frankfort HOPE

This week, we light the candle of Hope in our Advent wreath. At the same time, we face a world full of fear. Terrorism threatens daily. War rages. Refugees suffer. Racism stirs hatred. Politicians create mistrust. Oh how easily we can become cynical, or fearful, or both. And yet, Advent (which means 'coming') begs us to be hopeful--full of hope, full of light in dark days.

The candle of Hope is associated with the Prophets. As we teach our children in Godly Play, prophets come so close to God and God comes close to them that they know what God wants them to say and do and they do it. They point people to God's best way to live. Prophets can be men. Prophets can be women. Prophets can be you and me.

How are you called to be a prophet bearing hope this Advent? How will you come close to God and allow God to come close to you? What will God call you to say and to do?

Over and over again in the Gospels, angels assure folks, "Be not afraid. We bring you good news!"

Parker Palmer, well-known author and teacher says this in his book Let Your Life Speak:

*"**Be not afraid** does not mean we cannot **have** fear. Everyone has fear, and people who embrace the call to leadership often find fear abounding. Instead, the words say we do not need to **be** the fear we have. We do not have to lead from a place of fear, thereby engendering a world in which fear is multiplied.*

*We have places of fear inside of us, but we have other places as well--places with names like trust and hope and faith. We can choose to lead from one of those places, to stand on ground that is not riddled with the fault lines of fear, to move toward others from a place of promise instead of anxiety. As we stand in one of those places, fear may remain close at hand and our spirits may still tremble. But now we stand on ground that will support us, ground from which we can lead others toward a more trustworthy, more **hopeful**, more faithful way of being in the world."* p.93-94

As you read the Psalmist's prayer below, look for trust, faith, and hope.

Psalm 25: A Prayer for Guidance and Help

I offer you my heart, LORD God,

² and I trust you.

Don't make me ashamed
or let enemies defeat me.

³ Don't disappoint any
of your worshipers,
but disappoint all
deceitful liars.

⁴ Show me your paths
and teach me to follow;

⁵ guide me by your truth
and instruct me.

You keep me safe,
and I always trust you.

⁶ Please, LORD, remember,
you have always
been patient and kind.

⁷ Forget each wrong I did
when I was young.
Show how truly kind you are
and remember me.

⁸ You are honest and merciful,
and you teach sinners
how to follow your path.

⁹ You lead humble people
to do what is right
and to stay on your path.

¹⁰ In everything you do,
you are kind and faithful
to everyone who keeps
our agreement with you.

Closing Prayer: O God of the hopeful prophets, amidst these fearful times, give me your hope. Help me this week to lead not from fear, but from hope and to point others to your your best ways to live. Amen

With Great Hope,
Cynthia