

Chapter Six

Hope: Reimagined

“Hope, like every virtue, is a choice that becomes a practice that becomes spiritual muscle memory. It’s a renewable resource for moving through life as it is, not as we wish it to be.” —Krista Tippett

OPENING QUESTION

Reflect on whom you listen to, what you follow and trust, as you develop your sense of the story of our time and what is possible in it.

Is there a disconnect between the media narratives you follow and what you know in the world and people around you? Does the world you know reveal practical sources of hope alongside what is hard? Do you take the generative realities and possibilities around you as seriously as bad news?

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Sharing an example of her experience with the LArche community, Tippett speaks of hope in terms of moving forward, in terms of “signs, not solutions.”

What are some signs—markers, guideposts—that help you see and trust in redemptive possibilities for you and the world?

According to Tippett, “We are fabulous and contradictory through and through, living breathing both/ands.”

Is this true of you and people you admire? How might this be a source of hope?

Brené Brown says that her research and that of others shows that “hope is borne of courage.”

How does this make sense to you? How have you been formed by what scared you, by moving through experiences where you didn’t always know you could get to the other side?

Tippett calls the Internet “a new canvas for the old human condition” and suggests that it is up to us to turn this technology in its infancy to human purposes.

Does this idea give you ways to think differently about what you fear about our online lives? Have you had an experience of the Internet amplifying something—good or bad—that made you more self-aware and/or more compassionate towards others?

After reflecting on some whose lives and deaths have made the headlines Tippett muses, “Our world is abundant with quiet, hidden lives of beauty and courage and goodness. There are millions of people at any given moment, young and old, giving themselves over to service, risking hope, and all the while ennobling us all.”

Who in the world you know fits this description?

Tippett writes, “I have seen that wisdom emerges precisely through those moments when we have to hold seemingly opposing realities in a creative tension and interplay: power and frailty, birth and death, pain and hope, beauty and brokenness, mystery and conviction, calm and buoyancy, mine and yours.”

What seemingly opposing realities are you navigating now in your personal, civic, and/or professional life? How could you find ways to accompany others—and ask for companionship—to make this more bearable and hope more reasonable?

KEY QUOTATIONS

“In a century of staggering open questions, hope becomes a calling for those of us who can hold it, for the sake of the world.”

“Hope is distinct, in my mind, from optimism or idealism. It has nothing to do with wishing. It references reality at every turn and reveres truth. It lives open eyed and wholehearted with the darkness that is woven ineluctably into the light of life and sometimes seems to overcome it. Hope, like every virtue, is a choice that becomes a practice that becomes spiritual muscle memory. It’s a renewable resource for moving through life as it is, not as we wish it to be.”

“We live in a world whose contours are formed by story, not conquest, and shaped and reshaped continuously by connection. We are the points on the map.”

“Almost everything and everyone changing the world now is what we’ve forever referred to as ‘under the radar.’ The radar is broken.”

“I have a heart full, arms full, a mind brimful and bursting with a sense of what is healing us even as I write, even when we don’t know it and haven’t asked for it. And I do mean healing: not curing, not solving, not fixing, but creating the opportunity for deepened life together, for growing more wise and more whole, not just older, not just smarter.”

“I’m consciously shedding the assumption that a skeptical point of view is the most intellectually credible. Intellect does not function in opposition to mystery; tolerance is not more pragmatic than love; and cynicism is not more reasonable than hope.”

“Unlike almost every worthwhile thing in life, cynicism is easy. It’s never proven wrong by the corruption or the catastrophe. It’s not generative. It judges things as they are, but does not lift a finger to try to shift them.”

“We want to be called to our best selves. We long to figure out what that would look like. And we are figuring out that we need each other to do so.”

“I want a world free of murder, but not free of murder mysteries.”

“We are fabulous and contradictory through and through, living breathing both/ands.”

“Hope is an orientation, an insistence on wresting wisdom and joy from the endlessly fickle fabric of space and time.”

“The scenarios we spin most vigorously are about artificial intelligence, computers grown sentient, seductive, evil, in charge. I’ve wondered why we aren’t also pondering, with any sophistication, what the point of consciousness might be. Where is it taking us? Where do we choose to take it? What might spiritual evolution look like, in the most expansive sense of that phrase?”

“Evolution, [David Sloan Wilson] points out, is not always tantamount to progress; it can also move in the direction of decline.”

“A civic aspiration is a powerful thing—it gives moral imagination someplace to go.”

“We know in life that taking in our losses and grieving them is a step that is not in itself productive or ef-

fective—all those ways we measure what matters. But it's an opening without which only limited growth, movement out and forward, is possible."

"That vulnerability [after 9/11] brought Americans into a new point of kinship with far-flung strangers around the world, who live this way much of the time. But our response drew us apart again."

"Failure and vulnerability are the very elements of spiritual growth and personal wisdom. What goes wrong for us as much as what goes right—what we know to be our flaws as much as what we know to be our strengths—these make hope reasonable and lived virtue possible. They are part of our gift to the world."

"Hope is brokenhearted on the way to becoming wholehearted. Hope is a function of struggle."

"Recovering necessary elements of survival and vitality is a step forward, a piece of intelligence. This is another way to talk about the move from intelligence to wisdom—seeing basic realities again, finally, but for the first time with consciousness: evolution reflecting back on itself."

"To nurture a resilient human being, or a resilient city, is to build in an expectation of adversity, a capacity for inevitable vulnerability."

"Resilience is at once proactive, pragmatic, and humble. It knows it needs others. It doesn't overcome failure so much as transmute it, integrating it into the reality that evolves."

"The Internet is our version of splitting the atom. It holds immense powers, both perilous and promising, as it upends the meaning of ancient, elemental human things like making and leading and belonging and learning."

"Hope inspires goodness to reveal itself. Hope takes goodness seriously, treats it as a data point, takes it in. This is a virtue for living in and of itself: taking in the good."

"As Maria Popova says, the Internet is in its infancy. It is at a fundamental level a new canvas for the old human condition, salvation and sin, at digital speed and with viral replication. It is a magnifying glass on every human inclination, beautiful and terrible, trivial and mean, generous and curious."

"Our world is abundant with quiet, hidden lives of beauty and courage and goodness. There are millions of people at any given moment, young and old, giving themselves over to service, risking hope, and all the while ennobling us all."

"We often don't quite trust that rebirth will follow the deaths of what we thought we knew. We sense that somehow what comes next is up to us, but we're not sure where to begin. Yet it's precisely in these moments when we let our truest, hardest questions rise up in our midst, allow their place among us, that we become able to live into them rather than away and to do so together."

"Spiritual humility is not about getting small, not about debasing oneself, but about approaching everything and everyone else with a readiness to see goodness and to be surprised. This is the humility of a child, which Jesus lauded. It is the humility of the scientist and the mystic. It has a lightness of step, not a heaviness of heart."

"The mystery and art of living are as grand as the sweep of a lifetime and the lifetime of a species. And they are as close as beginning, quietly, to mine whatever grace and beauty, whatever healing and attentiveness, are possible in this moment and the next and the next one after that."