

# “Hopeful Imagination”

1 John 3:1-3 & 1 Corinthians 15:35-44 & 54

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**Prayer for Understanding** Ever present Lord, we thank you for your word, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Holy Spirit please open our senses to your presence. Amen

How are you expanding your hopeful imagination? Imagination is a form of baptism, a cleanse of living water, which washes away fear, hate, division, grief, and sadness; purifying us; and filling us with hope, love, community, peace, and joy. John explains it this way. **1 John 3:1-3 “What marvelous love God has extended to us! Just look at it—we are called children of God! That is who we really are. But that is also why the world does not recognize us or take us seriously, because it has no idea who God is or what God is up to. But friends, that is exactly who we are: children of God. And that is only the beginning. Who knows how we will end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we will see Jesus—and in seeing Jesus, become like Jesus. And all who have this hope and eager expectation purify themselves, just as Jesus is pure.”**

Watch a group of young children playing together, and you will likely notice their imagination. Pillows become a ship transporting them on grand adventures. Blankets become their capes as they save those in distress. A cupboard tube becomes a telescope bringing into view magnificent civilizations in distant space. A stick becomes a wand that stops evil and creates goodness.

What looks like simple fun is actually vitally work in a child’s development. Imaginative play develops psychological and emotional capacities, enabling us to learn how to solve problems, create new possibilities and believe that we can change the world.

Albert Einstein said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world ... Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life’s coming attractions.”

A hopeful imagination glimpses our glorious future, transforms us, and enables us to live into loving, joyful, abundant life. Jesus came to spark our imagination, to give us glimpses of life perfected, whole, and complete. The Holy Spirit continuously breathes life, love, peace, and joy into each of us.

John urges us to cultivate a childlike hopeful imagination of our coming glory. An imagination that motivates us to love extravagantly. John uses metaphors. God is light. Each of us are invited to receive the light and to share the light. If we do not regularly receive the light, we get lost in the darkness. If we do not share the light, our heart bends in on itself and shrivels. When we share the light, our heart expands producing abundant fruit that lasts forever.

John explains that our hopeful imagination purifies us, like Jesus is pure. We are to imagine how we will become like Jesus. You are to imagine all your goodness radiating glory into the cosmos, celebrated by everyone. You are to imagine how your love brings eternal majesty to the cosmos. To put it another way, we, the children of God, are to imagine ourselves in the person of Jesus and act accordingly. Like children wrapping themselves in the garb of the hero they want to be, we are to “put on Christ”. We are to imagine being an unstoppable force of pure good.

Hopeful imagination is a superpower. The more we grow our imagination the more power we have over fear, hate, division, greed, and despair. We are to imagine the most excellent way of love. Without hopeful imagination one can easily become overwhelmed by the mess of the world and the mess of our life. A child at play imagines they can do everything. A hopeful imagination fills us with creativity to live into abundant life.

Nelson Mandela said, “May your choices reflect your hopes not your fears.” Strive to spend more time imagining the glory of all people living in joyful, loving harmony than you spend fretting about all that is broken in the world.

Eugene Peterson said, “The imagination is among the chief glories of the human. When imagination is healthy and energetic, imagination ushers us into adoration and wonder, into the mysteries of God. When imagination is sluggish it turns people into parasites, copycats, and couch potatoes. Right now, one of the most essential Christian ministries in and to our ruined world is the recovery and exercise of the imagination. Ages of faith have always been ages rich in imagination. The materiality of the gospel (the seen, heard, and touched Jesus) is no less impressive than its spirituality (faith, hope, and love). Imagination is the mental tool we have for connecting material and spiritual, visible and invisible, earth and heaven.”

The story is told of two elderly men, roommates in assisted living. One had recently gone blind and was living in quiet despair. His roommate could see well, but he had trouble getting around and had no visitors therefore he was bored and lonely. He rarely left his bed, which was next to the window of their room. The man who could see began

describing to his roommate what was going on in the world outside their window. He told him of the mail carrier making her rounds; of neighbors walking their dogs; of the teenage boy and girl who passed the window every day after school — who first held hands, then embraced, then had an argument, then reconciled once again. As the days went on, the blind man was filled with joy from these updates from the outside world. Likewise, his roommate was filled with joy by sharing. He had a real gift for describing what everything looked like. They became good friends. One day the blind man's friend died. A new patient was wheeled in. The blind man asked his new roommate if he would let him know what was happening outside the window. "I would be glad to," said the roommate, "but I don't know how I could do that. There is nothing outside our window but a solid brick wall." The blind man was bewildered for a moment then realized the wonderful gift of imagination his friend shared. He imagined a world of vitality—imagined the mail carrier, neighbors, and the pair of teenage lovers — and he made those characters as real as if they had lived outside that window, every day. He realized there are things worse than having no sight. It is far worse to have no imagination, no inner vision.

The Apostle Paul invites us to imagine living in a fully resurrected cosmos. **1 Corinthians 15:35-44 & 54**  
**MSG Some skeptic is sure to ask, "Show me how resurrection works. Give me a diagram; draw me a picture. What does this 'resurrection body' look like?" If you look at this question closely, you realize how absurd it is. There are no diagrams for this kind of thing. We do have a parallel experience in gardening. You plant a "dead" seed; soon there is a flourishing plant. There is no visual likeness between seed and plant. You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking at a tomato seed. What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don't look anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body that comes from it will be dramatically different. You will notice that the variety of bodies is stunning. Just as there are different kinds of seeds, there are different kinds of bodies—humans, animals, birds, fish—each unprecedented in its form. You get a hint at the diversity of resurrection glory by looking at the diversity of bodies not only on earth but in the skies—sun, moon, stars—all these varieties of beauty and brightness. And we are only looking at pre-resurrection "seeds"—who can imagine what the resurrection "plants" will be like! This image of planting a dead seed and raising a live plant is a mere sketch at best, but perhaps it will help in approaching the mystery of the resurrection body—but only if you keep in mind that when we're raised, we're raised for good, alive forever! The corpse that is planted is no beauty, but when it's raised, it's glorious. Put in the ground weak, it comes up powerful. The seed sown is natural; the seed grown is supernatural—same seed, same body, but what a difference from when it goes down in physical mortality to when it is raised up in spiritual immortality! In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen: everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal. Then the saying will come true: Death swallowed by triumphant Life!"**

One of the reasons I enjoy traveling and exploring nature is it expands my hopeful imagination. Last month Leslie, Spencer, Abigail, and I traveled to Washington. We hiked in North Cascades National Park. God created these towering snow-capped mountains adorned with trees, meadows, flowers, critters, and glaciers. There are lakes on islands on lakes in the valleys. There are thundering waterfalls and singing streams. At times there is wind so strong you feel like it might pick you up and other times when there is sheer silence. There were moments when all we could see was white cloud and moments when spectacular beauty flooded our sight. All of this is a mere preresurrection seed. I enjoy imaging the full, perfected plant.

We hiked in Mount Rainier National Park. We left in the cold dark, serenaded by stars, hiking to Mount Fremont to enjoy the warm sunrise. Even in our dark moments there is beauty. God will transform every darkness into glorious light. Imagining the light comforts me.

We hiked up to Camp Muir, traveling through lush wildflowers, up and up and up we slogged on the snowfield. The air so thin that you had to intentional breath deep to get enough oxygen. We crossed crevasses with water thundering below us. First, we saw Mount Adams and Saint Helens, eventually we climbed high enough to see mountains in California. To the East we saw a plume of smoke. To our West the glaciers of Rainier. Numerous times we heard the cracking then booming crashing of the glacier face breaking off. Sometimes we were able to see the glacier give way. Life on earth is rugged, constantly evolving. God's "love you notes", the beauty, breaks through urging us to journey on, to imagine the beauty that is ahead of us.

We hiked among massive tower trees that have endured drought, fire, disease and majestically grow higher, wider, and deeper. I delight in imagining trees dancing and clapping for me as I am led forth in peace.

We enjoyed the diversity of Olympic National Park from mountains to ocean and from rainforest to meadows. We enjoyed the beach with the rhythm of powerful waves sculpting the coast. At low tide we ran out to a sea stack and for a few minutes the variety and color of the ocean critters was revealed. Spencer even spotted an octopus. I am

filled with awe as I imagine all the diversity, colors, shapes, sounds, tastes, smells, sensations that are all around us yet most of the time I do not notice them because they are veiled.

We hiked in the rainforest with an abundance of shades and forms of greens. Life and growth teaming all around us. I am inspired to imagine the many forms of life I have yet to discover.

Our adventures are abundant with laughter. An ongoing humor is me trying to be in stealth mode. I have a long and consistent history of making noise. One evening at 2 am we were in search of bioluminescence. Conditions were not right so we did not see much. On the screen is a picture of bioluminescence in ideal conditions. Our beach access was near a campground, so we all agreed to be in full stealth mode in hopes of not waking anyone. We gently shut the vehicle doors. I went to get our gear from the back and caught the raised hatchback on my forehead letting out a moan. After I indicated I was all right, we all laughed. A few seconds later I am looking up marveling at the stars and tripped on the curb making more noise. After that, we were all giddy with laughter.

A few days later Spencer and I were in full stealth mode looking for elk along the river. We hiked deeper into the woods as Leslie and Abigail started back to the vehicle. We did not see any elk. Suddenly I realized I had the keys, which we, Yorks, were consistent no matter who took the keys it was always the last person to return to the vehicle that had them. Not this time, Spencer and I started running back so we would be there first with the keys. On the other side of a clearing Leslie was waving at me. Aah after 29 years of marriage, she is still excited to see her love leaping, bounding, like a gazelle back to give her a hug or she is happy to have keys when she gets back to the vehicle. Spencer noticed it was a wave of stop. Spencer was stride for stride with my blazing speed, which I describe to be like a tortoise with injured legs, put out his hand to stop me. There in front of us was a momma elk and a calf. Rut row! Leslie said we were like Scooby-Doo all of our limbs flailing as we quickly stopped and backed up. We enjoyed watching the elk. Afterwards we laughed how Spencer and I almost ran into the elk. Humanity has a long history of hurting ourselves, stumbling, bumbling, and disturbing others. I am filled with hope as I imagine how God is bringing everyone together to laugh together, to share love and grow forever in love and joy. I enjoy imagining the future laughter we will all share as we marvel at all that God will grow from the seeds of our fun adventures.

I am filled with awe when I ponder how every person has good, grand imaginations and God will fulfill every good imagination. God has given you an imagination to fill you with hope, joy, and peace. God has given you an imagination to expand your love. Amen