

November 23, Reign of Christ/Christ the King (Jeremiah 23:1-6)

The prophet Jeremiah knew about hard times.

by [Richard A. Kauffman](#) in the [November 2025](#) issue

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I was sitting on a beach in the Florida Keys with my son and his pastor. Out of the blue, the pastor asked me, “Has there ever been a tougher time to be a pastor?” This was not a question I was going to answer quickly. I knew his congregation was embroiled in conflicts related to sexuality. After some consideration, I replied, “Probably not in our lifetime.”

It is not unusual for people to think they live in the worst of all possible times. This is often a symptom of people not knowing or forgetting history, which is replete with tough times.

That said, we do live in tough times. The intractable problems of my lifetime include racism and racial tension, the plethora of guns and gun violence, the great inequities between the superrich and the rest of us, the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and perhaps the most ominous of all, climate change. More recently you can add to this list rising authoritarianism and the opioid addiction crisis. Indeed, we live in challenging times. But living in challenging times to the east of Eden is part of the human condition, part of our human experience.

The prophet Jeremiah knew about hard times. When the Babylonians ransacked Jerusalem and took some of the elites into exile, life as people then knew it was turned upside down. In the midst of this doom and gloom, Jeremiah offered hope for the future: a righteous branch would spring up out of the ruin, and it would bring about justice and righteousness in the land. Christians, of course, have often associated this text with Jesus.

Though we, like Jeremiah, live in challenging times, we are not a people without hope. Although it’s become a cliché, there is truth in the saying: The darkest night is right before dawn.

Christian hope is not naive. It is quite aware of the darkness around us. It doesn’t flinch from or try to escape the darkness—it is not wishful thinking or mere optimism. Nor is Christian hope passive.

On the contrary, Christian hope is positive. It entails the confidence that we have a God who is with us through hard times, a God who can make good come out of evil, a God who will one day make all things new.

Christian hope is active. We live into the hope that Christ promises. Because Christ is our peace, we engage in acts of peacemaking. Because Christ is our righteousness, we live righteous lives empowered by God’s Spirit. Because Christ is our justice and our mercy, we engage in acts of justice and mercy.

Christian hope is also patient. Patience was a key theme in the early church, though it’s often been overlooked by the church since then (see Alan Kreider’s 2016 book *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*). We are patient because God is patient with us. “God is slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love” is a repeated refrain in the Old Testament. Because God is patient, we should be patient with others. “Love is patient, love is kind,” Paul says famously in his so-called love hymn, 1 Corinthians 13.

We don't try to force outcomes or coerce people into doing what we wish they'd do. Doing so can lead to unfortunate, unintended consequences. Patience is closely linked to peace: people often resort to violence because they've lost patience, or they lack imagination to find nonviolent ways to work at conflict resolution. Patience is possible because of hope. Impatience can be a sign of lost hope.

The Berlin Wall came down on November 9, 1989, having stood for 10,316 days. It has now been nearly 3,000 more days than it stood. How many of us thought that it was an immovable force, that it might stand for at least as long as some of us were alive? But there were a lot of East Germans who didn't give up hope. When Western reporters showed up after the wall came down, they wondered why so many people in Berlin had been burning candles. It was to express their hope that one day the wall would come down.

Worry rather than hope seems to be our natural instinct as humans. A friend suggested to me that just as worry is a habit, hope can be one as well. Any habit takes practice. About what are we hopeful? Where do we see signs of hope? Encourage one another with the signs of hope you are seeing.