

Six years ago, in late March, just after dropping my car off for a regular tune-up, I received a phone call from a young man from the dealership. He said he had noticed that my car was in the shop and he quoted how much I had spent thus far on my vehicle. His recommendation was that I should consider trading it in and buying a new car.

I explained to him that I had only recently made the final payment on this loan and I was, in fact, looking forward to not having to buy another vehicle for quite some time. "In fact," I said, "I'm hoping that I will get at least 300,000 kilometers out of this beast."

The young man on the other end of the phone laughed and said "maybe, but it's doubtful".

"Well," I responded, "it's almost Easter, and so I live in hope!"

Hope. It's an interesting concept. A few weeks ago, I had a friend ask me to explain hope, because she was pretty sure there was no such thing and positive she had none. I just love these deep, profound questions that land with a thud on my brain as it shuts down!!

After a deep breath and a few silent moments, I responded that I think there's always hope. We are always hoping for something – the sun to shine, the rain to fall, a friend to call, a loved one to show up at our door, a new job, a new house, a dream to come true, a challenge to be resolved. Hope, is what keeps us going, putting one foot in front of the other. Hope is what keeps us out of the depths of depression and despair.

That's why I think it is essential, to conclude this Season of Creation Series with a reflection on where we see hope in the context of God's creative world.

Can you name places, situations, sightings you've had that give you hope for creation? ...

As I read and re-read today's scripture text, I was filled with hope.

According to the Psalmist, it is God who waters the earth, provides for the people and blesses the growth of plants. But then the focus turns from God to creation:  
"the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy"

And it got me thinking about how adaptable creation is. We all know that there's a natural cycle of forest fires that help to enliven the soils, regenerate new growth and bring sunlight to the forest floor, and while climate change has impacted the number of fires that take place, it has not prevented the natural regeneration that occurs, helping to sustain life in other ways.

The whole concept of evolution is about the adaptability of nature. Throw something challenging at nature and it shifts its needs, shifts its way of being and comes back stronger than ever.

“In Alaska, one particular pink salmon population is migrating about two weeks earlier than it was 40 years ago ... Over that same time period, the local water temperature has increased by about one degree Celsius on average, an uptick that’s linked to climate change. The researchers argue that earlier migrating fish are better fit to handle warmer waters. [The] salmon populations [in this particular area of Alaska] have held steady over the last few decades and this adaptation may have made them more resilient.”<sup>i</sup>

And look at deciduous trees, as year after year, they cycle through rest and vibrancy of growth, adapting to temperatures and sunlight.

In her book *Seasons of Your Heart*, Macrina Wiederkehr writes:

“I worry too much. Autumn trees ask me not to worry. They, like Jesus, suggest trust rather than worry. So often in autumn I want to go lean my head against a tree and ask what it feels like to lose so much, to be so empty so detached, to take off one’s shoes that well, and then simply to stand and wait for God’s refilling.” She goes on to offer this poem:

Slowly she celebrated the sacrament of letting go  
First she surrendered her green  
Then the orange, yellow, and red  
Finally she let go of her brown  
Shedding her last leaf  
She stood empty and silent, stripped bare.  
Leaning against the winter sky  
She began her vigil of trust.  
Shedding her last leaf  
She watched its journey to the ground.  
She stood in silence  
Wearing the color of emptiness,  
Her branches wondering:  
How do you give shade with so much gone?  
And then,  
The sacrament of waiting began.  
The sunrise and sunset watched with tenderness  
Clothing her with silhouettes  
That kept her hope alive...<sup>ii</sup>

May we, like the autumn trees, keep our hope alive. May we see glimmers of hope all around us, may we embrace them and celebrate them, knowing that God is at work, creation is at work Hope is alive!

Oh, as for my car that I was encouraged to trade in...last week the odometer turned over to 330,000 kilometers, with little in maintenance costs. Hope my friends! It can't hurt and it sure can help us get through!

Thanks be to God!!

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/ten-species-are-evolving-due-changing-climate-180953133/?page=3>

<sup>ii</sup> Wiederkehr, Macrina. *Seasons of Your Heart Prayers & Reflections*. Harper San Francisco. 1991