

A WORD FROM FATHER KELLY

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Have you ever wondered what limits, or even prohibits a sense of hope in your life? Have you wondered why you find yourself saying: “I am not going to get my hopes up”? Why it seems easier to live in pessimism rather than optimism? Or why we tend to focus on the negative over the positive? Even as I write these questions I find a plethora of excuses with which to respond: Because this is what my experience has taught me...I am not going to hope for a change, because every time I do it never happens...so what is the point? If I do not hope from something good, then I am not going to be disappointed; if I focus on the negative then I might be surprised if something positive happens. We have all been there.

You may have heard me speak in the past about a practical little book: Ever Wonder: Ask Questions and Live into the Answers by Kobi Yamada and published by Compendium Publishing. The author presents a series of very practical and somewhat philosophical questions, and invites the reader to make a choice to live into the answer with a sense of hope. Mr. Yamada asks this question: “*Do you let yesterday use up too much of today?*” So often we limit our hopes and desires because past experiences have not produced the results we wished for or even expected. Why is it that we so willingly give the past so much power over our lives? How do we hope for a future of optimism when we are so controlled by a past of pessimism?

Advent is a time of hope! As such, Advent needs to teach us something about how to live the rest of life as well. The people of Israel did not allow the sin of our first parents to relegate them to a hopeless future plagued by self-pity, but rather they grasped with all of their might onto a hope in the promise that a Messiah would come to set the captive free, make the lame walk and the blind see again. They hoped in the promise that they would be saved. Today we know that the Messiah came; the promise fulfilled in the birth of Jesus born of a virgin to the House of David: Salvation, indeed, has come into our world!

Hope was not disappointed even as the Savior was scourged at the pillar, crowned with thorns, and nailed upon a cross. Rather, the power of hope was revealed when on the third day that same Savior was raised from the dead. God took what seemed to be a lost hope, a disappointment, and used it for his victory. Had Mary and the other disciples chosen to allow “yesterday” to use up too much of their “today” they would have missed the victory; they would have missed the resurrection!

So, what if we were to make a choice to keep our focus on today and what God is capable of doing in our lives...today? What if we were willing to allow the past to be the instrument which has brought us to this moment filled with hope and wonder about the miracles of tomorrow?