

Prisoners of Hope

Day 5 of our [40 Days of Mercy Fast](#)

'In spite of everything, Jesus, I trust You in the face of every sentiment which sets itself against hope.' (14)

Imprisoned by hope: Zechariah expressed well the exile of the Israelites (Zech. 9: 11-12). Far from their land, subject to the cruelty of other masters and their gods, the holy nation hoped against hope for mercy. The prophet reminded them of the covenant of blood God had made with them—unchanging, Almighty Mercy.

'Because of my blood covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to your fortresses, O prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.' (Zech. 9: 11-12).

Waterless pits...a form of punishment for restless Jews in Babylon, and an apt metaphor for all of us who know the Merciful Father and yet are entrapped by a merciless adversary. That enemy mocks the hope in our hearts; he lures us into the exile of sin then derides us for forfeiting the Mercy that could be ours.

At the onset of my journey in Christ, I fell into one such pit. I fled from a small group of believers and immersed myself in the gay community. Perched on the edge of the Pacific Ocean in a tiny room, I created a waterless pit where I sought to satisfy my thirst with others.

My thirst intensified. Because I had tasted the real thing—His blood, His body—the bodies I sought never sated me. Still I persisted in my delusion. One night, I chose to stop fighting; I asked God to leave, to release me to live as an exile, as a gay man, all my days. I felt despair draw near. The Merciful Father drew nearer still.

For some reason, one little praise song kept running through my head. I began to sing it out and as I did peace filled the tiny room. His Presence accentuated the sting of death in my unclean body; I felt sick and dirty. Then something like 'living water' began to fall gently from the sky, like morning dew, raining then rising and falling again until I felt clean.

I marveled at His goodness to me. He poured out a kind of liquid mercy that flooded my waterless pit and lifted me right out of it! He elevated me to the fortress that Zechariah prophesied for all 'prisoners of hope'. Raised up by Mercy, I partook of the blessing that was twice as good as the sin was bad.

What a Father. He finds us in our waterless pits and offers us the richest of fare.

When we receive that Mercy, hope rises and releases us from exile.

'In the time of my favor, I will answer you; on the day of salvation, I will help you...I will say to the captives, 'Come out!' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!' (Is. 49: 8, 9)

'Who is like You, Father of Mercy? Even our sin is not stronger than Your Mercy. You woo us with a Love sweeter and stronger than any the world offers. In that Love, we cry out for all those who have fallen into waterless pits. We rebuke the enemy of their souls, and ask for Mercy to come quickly to meet them. Release those imprisoned by hope with Your Divine Mercy.'