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The source of hope

All sorts of things can give us hope. The invincibility of youth – remember that? – when nothing was too daunting to attempt. As we get older previous successes can give us confidence to embark on new things with hopefulness. And some of us are just naturally optimistic, easily bouncing back from setbacks with hope in our hearts.

But sometimes fears crowd in and extinguish hope and we don't always have the resources within ourselves to regain it. When that is the case being told to cheer up doesn't always help! It's true that, at times, deciding not to focus on our fears can be a turning point but very often we need something from outside us to restore hope again.

Sometimes, when we have lost hope through being bruised or let down by others, a simple act of human kindness can restore our faith in human nature and give us hope again. And, not infrequently, the source of hope is the love of our friends and family. Which is why isolation and loneliness often bring real challenges for the human spirit.

But for me it is the Christian story that most gives me hope. That this world is not just a random accident but behind it there is a God who loves us. And although he is almighty and transcendent he does not just look on this world from afar but was born as one of us. That, out of love for us, he not only lived among us but he also died, brutally and apparently abandoned on a torturer's cross. Jesus' cry of "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) is a cry that stands alongside every moment of despair that I might know. And the fact that today he is more alive than ever gives hope even in the face of death itself. When we have no strength to cheer ourselves up, to know Jesus is to know real hope.