

## Sermon sound bites

These suggestions are not meant to provide the basis for a sermon/address but might just set the worship leader/preacher off in a direction that can be developed.

The prophets of the exile have the task of both challenging the people of Israel in Babylon and also offering them hope — a task needed today in so many of our churches. What Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah did, in their different ways was to offer visions of hope towards which people could aspire and work towards, thus moving them in the direction of the vision outlined.

**Reinhold Niebuhr** wrote in ‘Nations and Empires’

*“It is man’s ineluctable (inescapable) fate to work on tasks which he cannot complete in his brief span of years, to accept responsibilities the true ends of which he cannot fulfil, and to build communities which cannot realise the perfection of his visions”*

On the same theme **Jonathan Sacks** wrote in ‘The dignity of Difference’

*“Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the faith that together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue. Hope is an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope.”*

**Jean Vanier**, founder of “L’Arche” in his book ‘Community and growth’ said

*“We shouldn’t seek the ideal community. It is a question of loving those whom God has set beside us today. They are signs of God. We might have chosen different people, people who were more cheerful and intelligent. But they are the ones God has given us, the ones he has chosen for us. It is with them that we are called to create unity and live in covenant.”*

There are a number of examples in the Bible of God’s reluctant agents, Jeremiah felt he was too young, Isaiah too sinful, Moses too tongue-tied, Jacob too conniving and many others. Here are words from **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** from his ‘Letters from prison’

*“I believe that God can and will bring good out of evil, even out of the greatest evil. For that purpose he needs people who make the best use of everything. I believe that God will give us all the strength we need to resist in all times of distress. But he never gives it in advance, lest we rely on ourselves and not on him alone.”*

God’s call often comes through a “still small voice.”

**Timothy Ratcliffe** in ‘What’s the point of being a Christian’ writes,

*“It is through attentiveness to meaning and not brute force that we share in God speaking a word that brings in the kingdom... Jesus taught that small signs were part of God speaking a word that creates and recreates.”*