

ADVENT WEEK TWO

December 10, 2019

Being a Hope

Romans 15:14-21 (Common English Bible)

My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and are able to teach each other. Romans 15:14

The Netflix documentary *Homecoming* showcases the work and solidarities behind Beyoncé's headlining performance at the 2018 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. Halfway through the film, the voice of Black philosopher, activist, political theorist, and Christian thinker Cornel West floats over the soundtrack.

Much as Beyoncé's film does, West lifts up the words and presence of ancestors in the fight for Black liberation, including Curtis Mayfield's encouragement to "Keep on pushin'," and Nina Simone's prophetic protest song "Mississippi G*dd*m." He describes these stances as *being* a hope: "courageously bearing witness regardless of what the circumstances is because you're choosing to be the kind of person of integrity to the best of your ability before the worms get your body." Hope is not a feeling, but a practice of life aligned to God's promise that love and justice are breaking out in the world.

Paul grounds his ministry in this kind of practice of hope. Taking no credit for any results that might come from his own evangelism efforts, Paul doesn't have hope, he is a hope. He reminds the community of Jesus followers at Rome that they have the power to be hope to one another and others in the whole world too.

Choosing to be a hope isn't an emotional orientation toward an unknowable future or an otherworldly reward. It also doesn't mean your actions or words will bring you concrete results, or comfort and rest in this time and place. Choosing to be a hope is a faithful response to God's promises, and to God's faith in us as God's creatures of integrity and love.

This doesn't mean we do this perfectly. It's not an accident that West has described hope as a practice.

May being a hope be your practice in this season of blessed anticipation.

Dr. B. Yuki Schwartz

Adjunct Faculty