

After sixty-nine days of captivity in a hot chamber below two thousand feet of rock and dirt, thirty-three miners emerged from a small hole in the ground with relatively good health. Couples, families and friends were reunited and a nation accustomed to the global media reporting their troubles could stand in the spotlight with pride. Although many of us (admittedly, myself included) put these South American miners out of mind for most of the last two and half months, images and stories of the successful rescue in Chile last week gave us all something to feel good about.

So often in recent years, these mining accidents have ended badly for those trapped below. Being cut off for so long, and being so far below the ground with no way in or out, there was little hope in this incident turning out any better. The reality facing those on site was that a rescue was nearly impossible. Successfully overcoming the challenges would take weeks of preparation and rely on the operation going absolutely perfectly. There was a lot at stake...not just the lives of the trapped miners, but also the safety of the rescuers and the risk of failing before the eyes of the world. Yet, despite the risk and challenges, hope prevailed. Teams of engineers, mechanics, manufacturers, and operators from all over the world came together to imagine new things in new ways, and to believe in the impossible. Their willingness to risk for the sake of that which they hoped for brought about something amazing! The operation went perfectly, and in a real sense, thirty-three men and those who love them have experienced new life after death. This story and its good news gripped the world, not because many in the world know one of the thirty-three rescued miners, but because it serves as a lesson in hope to a world that can so easily forget.

As a Christian, I believe that I live with one foot in the world and one foot in the reign of God. It is a hard place to be. As people of faith, we are caught in this tension of believing in and proclaiming the promises of God (new life in the resurrection, renewal of creation and broken relationships, wholeness, peace, justice, etc.) while living in a world, society and humanity that seems to stand so firmly against all that we would hope for. We see people and nations trapped in poverty, desperate inequality, and cycles of violence, cruelty, abuse and warfare. We see people suffering with no way out. We see others, and perhaps ourselves, contributing directly or indirectly to such suffering in the world. We see leaders and their people try and fail time after time to make things right. Called to proclaim hope in such a world as ours becomes a risk in itself, and one we might rather just forget about.

But, as people of faith, we are never called alone to such a life. We never believe alone and are never sent alone to proclaim the absurd hope that the world will be renewed and made right by God's abundant grace. We are never alone in this life of faith because we have God's promise. We have God's presence with us in the Spirit and in one another. Called to live with one foot in the world and one in the reign of God, we enter a life with *all* of God's people, to come together in faith, to imagine new things in new ways, to engage in hopeless situations and take on impossible obstacles, that hope in God's reign will lead this world to new life. It is not an easy place to be, but if God is calling you to such a life, trust that you enter it with countless others, and with a hope that prevails!

Grace and Peace,
Peder Johanson