



suffering

stories of
hope
for...

Ukraine

Rosie Housman finds remarkable signs of God's grace and care in the most traumatic situations

We use the word 'hope' on a daily basis. 'I hope you have a good day', 'I hope there's no traffic', 'I hope you feel better soon',

'I hope it doesn't rain'. We say these phrases so often that we can forget what a valuable word 'hope' is. It can start to feel a bit empty, as if we are just keeping our fingers crossed or leaving things up to chance or circumstances.

In 1 Peter 1:3, Peter talks about something different: *'he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'*.

A *living* hope. Living things are active, moving and thriving. Through Jesus' death we receive salvation and are gifted this incredible hope, which gives us freedom to live, knowing that one day we will dwell with Jesus in heaven forever.

This hope was particularly poignant for me last year when I joined a Christian disaster relief team in Ukraine, six weeks after the start of the war. We were based in central Ukraine, providing medical care for internally displaced refugees passing through the city. Each person had their own experience and story of suffering since the start of the war.

One of the first patients I looked after had been caught in a missile attack on a railway station. Although she had shrapnel wounds to her body, the psychological distress she experienced from what she had seen was far greater. We were able to sit and be present with her in her grief.

Another elderly man had been rescued by his neighbour from their bombed-out apartment

block in Mariupol, where he had been alone for so long that he had terrible pressure sores. Miraculously, we found him a place in a local care home. For others who came through the doors, it was a case of playing games and bringing smiles to the faces of their traumatised toddlers, or simply chatting with scared teenagers.

Seeing the grief, despair, and uncertainty in each individual we cared for challenged all of us to keep looking to Jesus and trusting that, despite the deep suffering and desperation around us he, is our ultimate, living hope. As Martin Luther is said to have said, *'When we look around and wonder whether God cares, we must always hurry to the cross and we must see him there'*.

As nurses we see so much suffering and sadness, but also much joy and laughter. Whatever situation we encounter at work, in our churches, communities or families, we have the profound truth that Jesus loves us and is dwelling in us. What an incredible perspective to live by! 🌻

Rosie Housman is working as an Emergency Department research nurse in South London.