

# A(n)dvent Series

## Despair and Hope

Sunday message from November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022

~ Notes & Reflections ~

- **Advent is about Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, but sometime those things are not our experience.**
- **A(n)dvent is how we live in the “not yet”, in the “and”, in the hope of beauty in the midst of existing pain.**
  - ❖ What does the “not yet” look like in your life? How are you experiencing despair? What does your experience of hope look like?
  - ❖ Read [Psalm 88](#) slowly. What word, phrase or concept stands out to you? What portions of this Psalm reflect your experience? What might God be speaking to you?
- **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” ~ Jesus, in Matthew 5.4**
  - ❖ Read [Matthew 5.1-12](#) slowly, pausing after each phrase (or just verse 4, if that is more helpful).
  - ❖ For each verse (or just verse 4), consider what it might be like to fully embrace the first half (fully mourn, be poor in spirit, be meek, hunger, etc.). Imagine yourself affected mentally, emotionally, physically.
  - ❖ How might rushing through or skipping the uncomfortable emotions of first half of the verse(s) affect the impact (experience, blessing, etc.) of the rest of the verse(s)?
- **“Toxic positivity is a way of responding to your own or someone else’s suffering that comes across as a lack of empathy. It dismisses emotions instead of affirming them.” ~ Tabitha Kirkland**
- **In avoiding the uncomfortable emotions, we risk downplaying the holistic work our Savior came to do. We settle for cheap versions of hope, peace, joy and love.**
  - ❖ What do you pursue as a cheap form of comfort, a behavior that avoids the difficult emotions?
- **We become people of true hope, joy, peace and love by allowing the full voice of mourning and pain to cry out.**
- **We desire for Union Center to be a safe place for hurting people. But, we don’t get to be the ones to decide if we are safe. It is the people who need safety that get to describe us as safe or not.**
- **Before we write our stories of beauty, we need to sit with our stories of despair.**
  - ❖ Lament is a practice that leads us to enter into our own pain and enter into the pain of others, acknowledging the world is not as it should be, Jesus’ work is not yet done, sin still exists...
- **Lament is an act of worship. When I lament, I lay my pain in front of the One who feels that pain even more deeply than I do.**
  - ❖ Read the following passages: [Genesis 6.5-6](#), [Romans 8.26](#), [Hebrews 4.15](#). What do you learn about the heart and presence of God? How might that impact how you interact with God in the midst of despair?
- **God feels pain alongside of us. Jesus is so near to you and me. He runs toward and joins us in the pain.**
- **In order for despair and hope to exist simultaneously in us, we have to express them both.**
  - ❖ Choose a chunk of time to sit before God this week and write your own psalm of lament.