

Monday

Read Psalm 13 and Lamentations 3:19-26

From Braeden's sermon:

These are expressions of lament, which is defined as a passionate expression of regret or disappointment over something considered unsatisfactory, unreasonable, or unfair. Today I want to look specifically to the structure of these laments to explore an essential biblical practice that is often neglected by Christians today. In times of uncertainty and hardship, the practice of lament reveals where we have misplaced our hope, allows us to be vulnerable with our Father, asks God to act, and displays our confidence in our unshakeable Jesus.

Tuesday

Read Habakkuk 3

From Braeden's sermon:

As you go into 2021, where is your hope? Will you bring your burdens, your sin, your rebellion, your trouble understanding, and your grief to God? Will you trust in the promise that our hope in God will not put us to shame (Rom. 5:5)? I challenge you to remember a three-letter word from today that expresses the essence of lament. That word is "yet."

After his laments and God's responses to his complaints, Habakkuk writes a poem of his confidence in God's goodness and victory. It shows the meeting of emotion and faith. He says "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, **yet** I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength..." (Hab. 3:17-19). As we saw, Jesus express in his Gethsemane prayer, though he is in sorrow to the point of death, sweating blood, and grieving the sinfulness of the world, He expresses that His face is set on the goodness and sovereignty of His Father. He says "**yet** not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). By practicing Biblical lament, we give full acknowledgement to the depth of our suffering, our sorrow for our sin, and the groans of our world, and boldly proclaim that "**yet**, I will rejoice

in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength." (Hab. 3:19).

What is your "yet" for today and 2021?

Wednesday

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4

A little classic for you:

A Sunday school teacher was examining her pupils after a series of lessons on God's omnipotence. She asked, "Is there anything God can't do?" There was silence. Finally, one boy held up his hand. The teacher, disappointed that the lesson's point had been missed, asked resignedly, "Well, just what is it that God can't do?" "Well," replied the boy, "He can't please everybody." God can't force you to be pleased, but He invites you into His Kingdom grace. And how pleasing that is!

Thursday

Read Luke 1:26-38

The story of Jesus' birth upends the typical power structures of our world. His birth did so 2,000 years ago and it does today because the same power structures are largely in place. If Jesus' birth were cooked up in a center of politics, commerce, or entertainment, Jesus would be born in the largest, most important city to a famous, powerful family with lots of pomp and circumstance. Instead, we see scripture witness to something beautiful, profound, and simple. This passage begins the journey with the announcement that Jesus is coming. He will be born to a young woman of no worldly note who lives in a small, unimportant place. God doesn't need the world's spotlights. Instead, God is calling us to shine a light on Christ's birth with the whole of our lives from right where we are at. Shine a light on Jesus as we head into a new year!

Friday

Please read and reflect upon Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-12 in preparation for Sunday worship.