



## Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

### The Future of the Church: For the Sake of the World

11/30/2020

*And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38*

This past Sunday was the start of the Advent season; a season of preparation and anticipation to celebrate the birth of Christ. I love this season! The people of God lived in anticipation of the foretold savior for hundreds of years. This savior was promised to give them freedom, and in their minds he would set up an earthly kingdom to overpower their oppressors. The birth of a vulnerable baby to a teenage girl in a stable was not quite what they had pictured. But Mary was willing to follow God's leading even if it caused her great interruption and inconvenience. Her willingness to be used by God for the sake of others changed the course of history.

This year, I wonder what anticipation you are holding on to? Anticipation for an end to the pandemic. Anticipation for a reconciled relationship. Anticipation for a better future. Anticipation for justice and freedom for those who are oppressed in our society. Anticipation for peace from your anxious thoughts. Perhaps in your mind, like the Jewish people in Jesus' day, you have an idea of how those things will come to be. Maybe you find yourself striving to accomplish these things on your own, trying to find the solution in isolation. As we found out from the life and story of Jesus' birth, God's solutions do not always come the way we expect them and are never for our own benefit alone. Maybe it is time for us all to pause, listen to the guidance of God, and be willing to say "Let it be so", no matter how great an interruption or inconvenience it is in our own life.

One of my absolute favorite instagrams to follow is @blackliturgies. I want to leave you with their prayer from the first Sunday of Advent. I encourage you to make this your prayer this week:

*God of the long and aching wait,*

*This year has swelled with the grief and loss and longing of many. We want so much more than the present condition of this world. Where are you? There are seasons when it becomes difficult to believe in your nearness. Would you make it known to us now? That as we carry each other through this season, we would find miracle in the mundane, tiny sacred flashes of good as we wait for a healing that lasts. Help us to dream. That we would find even our prayers grown large in this season, asking for those things which we have marked off as foolish or naive. Help us to dream, not that we would pine for some mirage of how things used to be but that we would hold space for visions of life and societies where justice can breathe, where power is mobile, and where liberation leaves no soul behind. Come, Lord. And we will wait.*

#### **So Consider...**

1. What are the areas of anticipation in your own life that you are trying to accomplish on your own? How can our church community support you?
2. What stirs in your heart as you read the prayer above?
3. How might your small group be interrupted and inconvenienced for that sake of the world this season? Take action

- Sherri Walker