

Emmanuel: God Came Near – A Disappointed Hope

12.12.2021

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Recently, I went to a fast food establishment

I won't say which one

That's not necessary

But I went to this fast food... establishment

And they had a picture displayed

Of this food item

I'm being very vague on purpose

That had a picture displayed

Of this food item

And it looked fantastic

It appeared to be very flavorful

You know, in the picture

It appeared to be very fresh

It appeared to be...

I don't know what the opposite of smashed is

But the picture appeared to be that

The opposite of smashed

And I excitedly ordered

This food item

From this food establishment

I gladly handed over my money

Because, I mean, it's hard to put a price, on... that

I thought to myself

This is the best money I've spent in a long time

A reasonable amount of time passes

And a nice young gentleman calls my name

The sound of your name being called

This nice young gentleman calls my name

And as I approached

I realized there must be a mistake

Because I had ordered

*That*

And he was handing me

This sad little wrapper

It did not look fresh or flavorful

And it certainly did not look like the opposite of smashed

I don't know how long it had been under the warmer

Long enough for every bit of reality to be sucked away from it

You know, if I thought it would have helped

I would have brought him out

So he & I could look at the picture together

I mean, who knows, he's back behind the counter

Maybe they don't have a picture back there

But he didn't seem like he wanted

Additional information

So I ate my sad little sandwich

And went on my way

Have you ever ordered *that*

And gotten *this?!?*

Now you know I'm talking metaphor, right?

So let me ask you again

In your life, have you ever ordered *that*

And gotten *this?!?*

Today's message is about disappointment

**Week 3 in the series - A disappointed hope**

Welcome – online welcome

**Rob has done a great job in this series**

We met a few months ago and planned this out together

He's going to grad school

And this sermon series is part of his program

So we planned this series out together

And he's done a great job teaching

And He's described this hope that we have in Christ

That God longed to create a world

And a people

That He could be *with*

To walk and talk and *live* with

### **But that hope was severed**

He talked about that two weeks ago

That the hope was severed

Our sin has caused us to be separated from God

So that we couldn't walk through life with Him

Like Adam & Eve had before

So God commanded us

In part because we couldn't be with Him as intimately

### **He commanded us to do life together**

With each other

That was last week's message

You know, this last two years

Has made it clear that the church was never meant to be a building

But it was always meant to be a gathering  
And we find hope  
Together  
So especially in these days  
We need to prioritize being together

And yet – there are still days  
When we look at the brochure  
And we say  
I'm not sure my life matches my expectation

### **And we have a disappointed hope**

I think the word disappointed is so profound  
The prefix “dis” means not  
So if you're disappointed  
You're not appointed for this  
You didn't sign up for it

You didn't choose for your life to be this way  
It often wasn't what God chose either  
God wanted to walk with us  
And make life what it was supposed to be

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When things got broken

He sent Jesus so that we could walk with Him eventually

Revelation tells us what that's going to look like

Look at Revelation 21:

**Revelation 21:1 – Then I saw “a new Heaven and a new Earth,” for the first Heaven and the first Earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.**

This is a description

Of the end of time

The Apostle John saw a vision

Of how everything's going to end

And he wrote it down for us

Notice the first change that we'll have to get used to

Do you see it?

There will “no longer (be) any sea”

What does the sea... do?

It separates us

Less now because of technology

But for centuries

It completely divided humanity

That goes away in Heaven

And He tells us that

God is going to make everything new

**Revelation 21:2 - I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.**

Make sure you catch the picture of a wedding here

The Bible says when a follower of Jesus dies

He or she goes to be with God

You close your eyes in death

And you open them in the presence of God

And those who have gone before us

Who had pledged their lives to Christ

Are right now in the presence of God

And they are right now waiting to come down together

“Prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

If we’re here when the world ends

We’ll see that

Or if we’ve already passed before then

We’ll be a part of that procession

If we’ve given our life to Christ

Verse 3:

**Revelation 21:3-4a – And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes.**

Does this imagery sound familiar?

The Bible begins with God

Being *with* people on the earth

The Bible ends *here...* in Revelation

With God finally realizing His vision

To be *with* the people

And we live now in the in between

We live now in the in between

Where God's Spirit is with those of us

Who have pledged our lives to Him

And where God's Spirit longs to be with those

Who have *not yet* accepted Him

And it says **He will wipe every tear from their eyes**

He will wipe every tear from our eyes

What does that mean?

That means we sometimes arrive in Heaven with tears

Can you visualize that?

Life is challenging

He never promised us otherwise

And sometimes we arrive at the throne room of Heaven

With tear stained eyes

In pain because our bodies hurt

In pain because we were leaving our loved ones behind or what we'll miss

In pain because in this world we have trouble

Sometimes we arrive at the throne room of Heaven

With tear stained eyes



But its ok

It's ok because it says He will wipe away every tear

Some of us need to hear that today

Some of us need permission to cry

To not feel ok

To feel disappointed

And its ok because He sees it

He sees the disappointment

He sees you

And one day

When you stand before your Savior

He will look at you in a way

That you have never felt so known

And seen

And that you have never felt so loved

And then He will gently wipe... that all... away

One thing I failed to point out

Did you notice the volume here?

**It says, "And I heard a *loud* voice from the throne"**

A loud voice

God's desire to be *with* us

Is not new  
And God's desire to be *with* us  
Is not timid

It's like the State of the Union

Before the President comes into the room  
And the Sergeant at Arms walks in and yells  
"The President of the United States!"  
And everybody stands  
Because this is the big moment  
This is the moment when the President has arrived  
And John gives us a picture from Heaven  
Where the Sergeant at Arms in Heaven  
Yells in a loud voice  
"God's dwelling place is now among the people"  
And all of Heaven takes notice

And if we've given our life to Christ  
And passed away before the end of the world  
We will ride down in that procession with Christ  
We'll hear the sergeant at arms  
And we'll all cheer  
If we're still here when it happens  
We'll see the procession coming

Our loved ones

The Church

Coming with Christ

Through the clouds of Heaven

“God’s dwelling place is now among the people”

And look what changes at that point:

**Revelation 21:4b-5a – There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”**

He lists four things going away

For the sake of time

I’m going to clump them together into two:

He says that when God comes to live among us

**There will be no more death or mourning**

What would it be like to live without death and mourning?

It’s almost incomprehensible

I remember when I was a kid

Noticing how older people often seemed grumpy

Now that I’m an older person myself

I’m beginning to understand

Older people

Have endured a great amount

Of mourning and pain

If Jesus carries

The only thing that will keep you

From going to a funeral for every person in your life today

The only thing that will keep that from happening

Is our own death

Welcome to WellSpring

We're full of the Christmas Spirit here

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The older we get

The more loss we'll endure

I saw a quote this week that really spoke to me:

**"The human heart was never designed by God to bare up under all of the hits and disappointments it takes."**

And that's the truth

We have a great hope

But sometimes its hard to see through the disappointment

In Heaven that stops

Some of us this morning

Are feeling the weight of loss

Feeling the weight of mourning and death

And it hurts us deeply

I need you to know that the moment you step into eternity

You will realize that He's seen you and loved you through every heartache

David writes:

**You've kept track of my every toss and turn through the sleepless nights,  
each tear entered in Your ledger, each ache written in Your book. – Psalm  
56:8 (MSG)**

And when you stand before God

You'll know to the core that that's true

And like a window cleaner on a sunny day

He'll wipe... that all away

Revelation tells us that:

**There will be no more death or mourning**

**And there will be no more crying or pain**

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In 2 Corinthians 12

Paul tells the Corinthian Church

That he has a "thorn in his flesh"

We don't know what it was

But we know it was painful

And we know he prayed repeatedly for God to fix it

And God, for whatever reason, didn't

Sometimes when we pray for God to take the pain away

He does

Often, like Paul, for whatever reason

He doesn't

But in Paul's case, God tells him

And by extension us

Why He said no

**2 Corinthians 12:9a (NLT) – Each time He said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.”**

One day in Heaven

We will have no more crying or pain

But in this life we'll hurt

And yet its ok

Because His grace

Brought about through His suffering on the cross

Is all we need

Pain is life's way of declaring

“I need God!”

We like to think we're self-sufficient

The NIV says it this way:

**2 Corinthians 12:9a – But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.”**

You & I are not self-sufficient

We need God

Pain is a fantastic reminder

Pain is a fantastic reminder

When you read this passage

You get the idea that Paul spent some time thinking about this

Ruminating on it

And then he came to a conclusion:

If pain reminds me that I need God

And God works best when I remember

Then I might as well get really good at owning this

**2 Corinthians 12:9b-10 – Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

One day in Heaven

He’ll wipe all of this away

But in the mean time

Don’t run away from pain

Don’t just focus on what pain takes away

Be reminded of the good work that pain can do in your life

Let me stop a second

I work really hard

Every teacher who stands before you  
Works really hard  
To ensure that everything we're saying  
Lines up with Scripture  
Sometimes, I'll have things that I'm not 100% sure about  
And usually, I just won't tell you those things  
But sometimes  
I have things that I'm not 100% sure about  
But if I'm right, they are so powerful  
I don't want you to miss them

This is one of those times  
So what I'm getting ready to say may not be right  
I think it is  
But I could be wrong  
But if I'm right  
And you implement this into your life  
Into your pain  
It could be transformational

Paul says:

**I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.**



It appears like he's saying

Hold on – before I speak heresy

Let me set this up

**The word “Boast” is the Greek word εὐδοκῶ (eudokō)**

It literally means “To think well of”

It's a compound word combining eu – which means “well”

And dokeo which mean “to think”

It's straight forward – εὐδοκῶ means “to think well of”

So literally, Paul is saying

I will think well of my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

It appears like he's saying Christ's power comes

Not because we're weak

Christ's power comes

Because we “think well” of our weaknesses

Weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, difficulties

They come no matter what we think

But if we think well of them

Christ's power comes too

And why would we think well of them

Because they remind us

And declare to the world  
That "We need God"  
That we're not sufficient on our own  
That "we need help"  
And when we're clear on that  
He can come with the power  
That He longed to provide all along  
To make us very, very strong  
To be *with* us  
Emmanuel  
In our weaknesses  
In our hardships  
In our difficulties

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We traveled over thanksgiving  
So we got off the interstate at a random stop  
It had a few fast food places  
And because its out of state  
I won't tell you which restaurant  
But it rhymes with McDonalds

So we pull in  
We were just getting drinks  
So we pull in

And there's a big line  
Which I'm thinking is a good sign  
    Good places are usually busy  
I get real suspicious when I pull in  
    And it's a ghost town  
So we wait and wait and wait  
    And wait  
Put in our order  
    And then wait some more  
And new people keep coming  
    The line stays huge

So I pull up to the window  
    And this guys does not have the Christmas spirit  
I'm not sure what they were paying him  
    But he thought it wasn't enough

I disagreed with him

So he hands me a couple teas, a coke a coffee  
    And Arica's McFlurry  
All we're waiting on is a second coffee

So as he hands me Arica's McFlurry

He looks at me like I've done something wrong

And I look back at him

Because he *has* done some things wrong

And finally

We had an O-K-Corral moment there

Finally, he asks

"Do you need something else?"

I try to be polite

I say, yes, we still need one more coffee

And he quickly kinda pounces on me

I hadn't seen this much energy out of him up to this point

But this gets him excited

He says, "They didn't charge you for that?"

It's like he doubles as McDonald's comptroller or something

"They didn't charge you for that?"

So I whip out the receipt

Let the record show...

I think I may have even given it a little shimmy

I whip out the receipt

And say –

Now lets be honest, I'm still pretty tame at this point

I say, "Yeah, its right here... we did"

And at this point, he goes back into... hibernation

And he says, "let me see that"

I guess he looked at me

And decided my integrity was worth less than \$1.79

I don't know

"Let me see that"

Long pause

"oh."

That's all I got

No I'm sorry

No let me get that for you

No we'll rush that order

Just "oh"

Hands me my receipt back

And then another long pause

While he's inside

Performing the internal audit

My daughter Arica, from the back seat of the van

Arica, who at this point realizes her dad is probably less than fully patient

Arica from the back seat

Let's out a little, "uh... dad?"

So I – her loving father

Turn to respond to my lovely daughter

With a smile and dose of patient compassion

"Yes my love?"

Arica doesn't even say anything

She just kinda...

I'm not making this up

You know how with McFlurry's

They'll put the stuff in

And then they use the spoon as the blender

She hands me the cup

With a little whimper

And there – wrapped around the spoon

In the middle of her ice cream

Is a long... wad... of hair

I'm looking at it thinking

This is going in a sermon somewhere

So buddy boy comes back

He's excited

And he hands me my second coffee

Without any apology or fanfair or, you know, courtesy

And then he starts to shut the window

And I say – I'm beginning to feel bad

For the 18 cars behind me

But I say, "There's a hair"

And then I give him the international symbol for "wrapped disgustingly  
around the spoon"

You know the symbol

And then I kinda offer it up to him

Like Simba in the lion king

I wish I was making this up

He doesn't grab the cup

He just leans out the drive thru window

And peers down into the cup

Leans back and just as calm as could be says

"That's not my hair"

And then he was done

OK – glad we settled that

“Honey, just eat the hair, it’s not his”

I say, I understand... but can I get a new one?

And he looks at me with yet one more long pause

He looks like he’s weighing his options

Like what did they tell me to do in this moment?

There’s a wad of hair wrapped around the spoon in the ice cream

This was like the second day of training

What did they say about that?!?

Mind you, he’s still not grabbed the cup at this point

So I do the Lion King gesture a 2<sup>nd</sup> time

And he finally decides

Against his better accounting background judgment

He finally decides

To get Arica a new McFlurry

If McDonald’s Incorporated goes under

It was the wasteful spending of the young man

At the Rensselaer, Indiana McDonalds

Let me ask you a question:

Has the reality of your life



Ever been different then the expectation?

You can see the ice cream

You can see the m&m's there ready to be eaten

But right there in the middle of it

Is a corruption that's inescapable

It touches everything

Just like my daugher's icecream

This can't be fixed

A second spoon wouldn't have satisfied my disapproval

Him pulling the hair off

Throwing it away

And then handing it back to me wouldn't work either

We needed it to be new

It was inescapably corrupt

Listen to me

You need God

You were made to live *with* Him

And without Him

You are inescapably corrupt

So you can work hard

You can try better  
You can read books and blogs and listen to TED talks  
But without God in your life  
Something will always be off

And you will continue to have Weaknesses

And hardships

And difficulties

But if you will see through the pain

Through the disappointment

You will find that God has been there all along

A baby – not in palace surrounded by opulence

But in a manger surrounded by dirt and struggle and poverty and pain

And He longs to be with you

Now – in the in between

Until one day

When He wipes every tear from your eye