

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

November 30, 2025

**Brought to the Light
“Groaning with Hope”
Romans 8:18-27
Rev. Mike Fordham**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, imprisoned by Hitler during World War II, wrote to his fiancé from prison in Germany, on November 21, 1943, about one lesson he learned from life in prison saying, “A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes, does various unessential things, and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside is not a bad picture of Advent.” The word, “advent” is from the Latin word, *adventus*, which refers to a “coming” or an “arrival”. The season of Advent is an annual celebration of the factual, historical, miraculous birth of Jesus, God Himself, who came into this world to set us free from the destructive prison of sin. Advent also, as Bonhoeffer pointed out, is meant to be a time of great expectation, of hopeful waiting for the day that Jesus will return again and once-and-for-all set us free from the curse of sin. Advent’s purpose is to remind us that we are living during the time between Jesus’ first and second comings. We are still in a hurting, broken, suffering world like Jesus was born into in His first coming. Yet, we endure this time of suffering in the light of the hope we have for Jesus’ coming to fully save us from our sins and renew all of creation. Until then, God has given us the Holy Spirit who helps us in our weaknesses to overcome this world of suffering and sin.

Romans 8:18-27

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

ALL OF CREATION IS SUBJECTED TO THE CURSE OF SIN

The Apostle Paul first points out that ***All of Creation is Subjected to the Curse of Sin***. We live in a world of suffering where every human being and everything God created in the universe is suffering. Paul says in verse 20 that all of creation has been subjected to a curse put upon it, the curse of sin. When God created at the beginning of time, God made heaven on earth in the Garden of Eden. All of creation, including Adam and Eve, enjoyed a perfect life. But when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, the curse of sin corrupted God's perfect masterpiece of creation. Think about the difference sin has made to God's original creation. God created one man and one woman. God created only two genders which are obvious by the anatomy of the man and the woman. Yet due to the corrupting influence of sin, today our world is full of gender confusion to the point that people harm their bodies to line up with their self-perception. God also created one man to be in an intimate relationship with one woman, what we call marriage. Jesus confirms this was designed and instituted by God. Anything contrary to this is contrary to God's will. The curse of sin has distorted this understanding of sexuality that God designed to be enjoyed only within the boundaries of marriage between a man and a woman.

Also, before sin entered this world, every aspect of creation was in perfect harmony with each other. God gave humanity the role of managing, overseeing and caring for creation. When sin entered the world, God said from that point forward humanity will be in conflict with the snake which really represents all creation. As human beings, we no longer have a peaceful, harmonious relationship with animals and all of the environment. Now the world rages with natural disasters of all kinds, from earthquakes to hurricanes. In addition, God said that due to the curse of sin, instead of finding joy and fulfillment in the work of managing all of God's creation, it now has become hard work, often very burdensome. God said another curse of sin is that childbirth will be painful. Also, before sin existed, Adam and Eve had the perfect relationship with each other. When the curse of sin entered, it corrupted their relationship with each other and their children even to the point that one son killed the other. Sin has so polluted our relationships that our world is now full of conflict, violence, hatred, verbal and physical fights, wars, gossip, back-stabbing, hurtful critical and judgmental spirits, broken marriages and homes, and so much more. Also, when God created Adam and Eve, they had bodies which were designed to live forever. When the curse of sin came upon this world, sickness, disease, and death became the reality for every part of creation, not just humanity. Finally, when God created heaven on earth, He would walk and talk

with Adam and Eve in an intimate relationship where nothing was hidden. When the curse of sin came upon this world, Adam and Eve hid from God in shame and fear. Sin separated us from an intimate relationship with God and countless people in our world today are still separated from God and even those of us who know God struggle in our relationship with God because of sin's pull upon us.

As Philip Yancey says, "The kingdom of suffering is a democracy, and we all stand in it or alongside it with nothing but our naked humanity." All of us are sinners and as a result every aspect of our lives has been marred, corrupted, and polluted by the curse of sin. On that first Advent, God came into this world through Jesus, as a humble, vulnerable baby. God Himself experienced the curse of sin as He became a member of a humble, homeless, poor couple. Jesus and His parents eventually had to go on the run to save Jesus' life from a crazed ruler. As Jesus became an adult, He experienced the pain of loss, rejection, violence, and even death and for this reason the prophet Isaiah called Jesus, the Suffering Servant. Even God was not exempt from suffering.

ALL CREATION EAGERLY WAITS IN HOPE FOR THE COMING DAY OF GLORY

Not only has all of creation been subjected to sin but *Romans 8* also tells us that ***All Creation Eagerly Waits in Hope for the Coming Day of Glory***. Paul uses the analogy of a woman in labor, groaning with pain, longing for the pain of labor to be over and to finally give birth to the long-awaited child. So also, all of creation is in labor wanting the pain of the curse of sin to be over with. Creation is agonizing as it waits for the day to finally come where there will no longer be any more natural disasters, violence, conflict, fights, wars, crime, hatred, killing, broken relationships, broken homes, addictions, mental health struggles, and to once and for all rid this world of death. All of creation is longing for that day to come. C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* saying, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." Our deepest desires which this world cannot fully satisfy indicate a longing for something beyond this world, pointing towards a heavenly home with God. We are longing to return back to the Garden of Eden, to the perfect life we were meant to experience.

God promises us that one day in the unforeseen future, Jesus will return again and will rid this world of sin forever. All wrongs will be made right. Jesus will also transform all of creation including us. *1 Corinthians 15:51-53* says about that day, ⁵¹*But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed!* ⁵²*It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.* ⁵³*For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.*" On that future glorious day, these bodies of ours which cannot live forever will be transformed into heavenly bodies that will live forever just like how Jesus' body was transformed when He rose from the dead. God will also heal and transform our world and will join this new world with what God calls a new heaven. Then God will make His home among

us where we will live forever in the new Garden of Eden which will be the new heaven and new earth joined together forever. *Revelation 21:1-4* describes it like this, “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, ‘Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.’”*

In this season of Advent, we understand that all our pain and suffering serves to prepare us for the abundant, eternal life we will one day fully experience when Jesus returns to make everything right. Paul David Tripp states in his book, *Forever: Why You Can't Live Without It*, that the Bible says the impermanence of life on earth is like dwelling in tents. Tripp writes: “Most of us have no pilgrim experience, so perhaps the closest thing in our experience to the journey of a pilgrim is rustic camping. I am persuaded that the whole purpose of camping is to make a person long for home! On that first day in the woods, putting up the tent is exciting, but three days later your tent has unpleasant odors you can't explain. You love the taste of food cooked over an open flame (that's ash!), but three days later you are tired of foraging for wood and irritated by how fast it burns. You were excited at the prospect of catching your dinner from the stream running past your campsite, which is reported to be teeming with trout, but all you have snagged are the roots on the bottom. You're now four days in and your back hurts, there seems to be no more felled wood to forage, and you're tired of keeping the fire going anyway. You look into what was once an ice-and-food-filled cooler to see the family-sized steaks you have reserved floating gray and oozing in a pool of blood-stained water. Suddenly you begin to think fondly of home You stand there hoping that someone will break the silence and say, ‘Why don't we go home?’ Your four days in the wilderness have accomplished their mission. They have prepared you to appreciate home!” Tripp adds: “Our world isn't a very good amusement park. No, it's a broken place groaning for redemption. Here is meant to make us long for forever. Here is meant to prepare us for eternity.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE FORETASTE OF FUTURE GLORY

As all of creation is now longing with great hope for the day when we will be delivered from the curse of sin, *Romans 8* shares the good news that God has given us ***The Holy Spirit as the Foretaste of Future Glory***. We are still living in a world raging with the curse of sin. We don't know when the day will come when Jesus will return and make everything new. Until then, God does not leave us alone to fend for ourselves. Instead, *Romans 8* tells us God has sent us the Holy Spirit to help us in our weaknesses. All of us who are Christians have the Holy Spirit living within us who begins the process of healing us from the effects of sin from the inside out. As we are forgiven of our sins, the Holy Spirit has brought us back into an intimate, personal relationship with God where

we can now call God our Heavenly Father just as Jesus did. The Holy Spirit is making us new creations and giving us the power to overcome sin's power in us. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to heal our broken marriages and dysfunctional homes, to break the curse of sin in our lives, to heal to our mental and emotional struggles, to love even the most unlovable people, to forgive instead of taking vengeance upon those who have hurt us, and to break the power of addictions. In every way imaginable the Holy Spirit is helping us now to reverse the curse of sin in us. Paul says that the Holy Spirit even prays for us according to God's will when we are too overwhelmed to know how to pray.

Jesus promised His disciples about the Holy Spirit's coming in *John 14:16*, "*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.*" Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Advocate which can also be translated as helper. The Greek word literally means, the one who comes alongside of. God has given us the Holy Spirit to come alongside of us and help us to make it to the finish line of this hard marathon called life. Training for a marathon is one of the most physically demanding activities you can willingly put yourself through. And when race day finally comes—after months of training and hours spent pounding the pavement—you want to finish the race strong. But sometimes, that just doesn't happen. A runner at the 2023 London Marathon experienced this as he worked his way towards the end of the race. In a short video shared on Reddit, a man in a black cap begins to double over and is on the verge of collapsing as other participants whizz by. But before he falls to the ground, another runner comes from behind him and grabs his arm. He's able to hold the runner steady enough to keep going. Shortly after, another person appears on the man's other side. Together, the three runners make their way to the finish line. It's unclear if the men knew each prior to the race. But when it comes to marathons, finishing with a fast time is only one component. The camaraderie—knowing thousands of other people are doing the same thing as you—is part of what makes the experience so special. And helping someone in need? Even better. Though the three guys didn't finish first, they won that day. *This story beautifully illustrates the presence of the Holy Spirit, the One called to be beside us, our Advocate.* As we are in this marathon of hope running to the finish line there are innumerable obstacles within ourselves and in the world around us. We cannot make it to the finish line of the hope of our glory on our own. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to make up the difference in our lives, to compensate for our weaknesses. Listen carefully to what *Titus 3:3-7* says about the difference God is making in our lives through the Holy Spirit until Jesus returns, *"³ Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. ⁴ But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, ⁵ he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. ⁶ He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. ⁷ Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life."*

This Advent season we celebrate that God loved us enough to send Jesus into our suffering. We look ahead with hopeful expectation of the day when Jesus will return and once and for all heal us and all creation. Until then the Holy Spirit is living within us helping us overcome the curse of sin.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *Brought to the Light – Advent for All Who Need It*, Anna Grace Legband
- *Forever: Why You Can't Live Without It*, Paul David Tripp
- *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis

Icebreaker Questions

1. When you hear the word “waiting,” what comes to mind first — excitement or frustration? Why?
2. What is something in your life that once felt difficult or painful but later helped you grow or appreciate something more deeply?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Bonhoeffer compared Advent to a prison cell where we wait for someone to open the door from the outside. How does that image help you understand what Advent is really about?
2. Romans 8 describes creation “groaning” like childbirth. Where do you personally see or feel the groaning of a broken world today?
3. Paul says that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will one day be revealed. How does this perspective challenge or encourage you in seasons of pain or uncertainty?
4. Advent invites us to live between the first and second coming of Christ — already saved, but not yet fully restored. What does faithful waiting look like for you in practical, everyday terms?
5. The sermon shared how the Holy Spirit comes alongside us, helping us in our weakness and interceding when we don’t know how to pray. How have you experienced the Spirit’s help in your own life?
6. C.S. Lewis said our deepest desires point to the reality that we were made for another world. What longing or yearning in your soul reminds you that this world is not your true home?
7. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week’s sermon to your life?
8. How might this group pray for you this week?