

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. "...to attempt to create anything in this world is to take a risk. All creating is an expression of vulnerability." When have you taken this kind of risk in life? Was it worth it? When did you take a risk that failed to result in what you thought you were going to gain?
2. Read the passages. What are you thinking, feeling, experiencing as you read these? (spend time - or the whole time on this if you like!)
3. The passages speak about a God willing to be this vulnerable, that God is willing to open up to deeply connect with us. The real question is, are we willing to do the same? Why do we avoid vulnerability so much?
4. When have you been vulnerable with someone and it went poorly? What about when it went well?
5. Pregnancy involves "unease". If we apply this to our lives as a metaphor, what kinds of things do you think God wants to "birth" in us?
6. Why does growth require us to embrace unease?
7. What areas of your life have you have avoided uneasiness, why?
8. Sometimes we confuse peace with no feelings of conflict, a lack of unease. Why would that be misleading?

PRAYER:

NOVEMBER 29 ■ ADVENT 1

honest
advent
vulnerability
+
unease

PSALM 139:13-16. LUKE 1:38(26-39)

"Have yourself a merry little Christmas," goes the song, evoking the "olden days, happy golden days of yore."

Advent is exactly the opposite of all this... Advent refuses to dwell in a past that never was. Advent is about the future. It isn't a season of remembering something that happened a long time ago, it is a season of preparation for the great coming day of the kingdom of God." (F. Rutledge, 338) Beginning this Sunday (Advent 1), we explore moving in and out of nostalgia and familiarity and tending to God's presence in our lives. As part of our Advent journey, we will be using Scott Erickson's book, *Honest Advent*, in which he tells us, "This [Advent season]... is an exploration of finding the God-with-us coming into our midst now.... the Birthday Boy hiding out in the mechanics of this life—the one you're presently living."

BIG IDEA: Growth in life, relationships, and spiritual breakthroughs requires we embrace vulnerability and unease.

HONEST ADVENT BIG PICTURE

- Advent is the opposite of romanticizing the past.

"Advent is the opposite, nostalgia and sentiment play no part in the season. Advent refuses to dwell in a past that never was. Advent is about the future" (F. Rutledge, 338).

- **Luke & Acts Relationship/Holy Spirit**

EXPLORING THE FIRST OF THE TWO WORDS: VULNERABILITY AND UNEASE

- **Vulnerability**

Any real connection involves vulnerability.

In 2021, we will spend time talking about Biblical peacemaking. It requires being vulnerable. How can we be vulnerable without being re-victimized when hurt?

1. Expanding the circle

2. Leaning on God - the Holy Spirit

'Vulnerability is stopping trying to control our story with God and letting God into our story. Your "yes." "How will this be?" The Holy Spirit...

Prayer increases your "risk-capacity" - your vision to see imaginatively things as they could be capacity.

Mary says "Yes... according to Your word."

When we choose vulnerability, we will then experience unease and want to end it but we should lean into it. Some of us hyper-spiritual folks have been taught that "unease" often means demonic or evil. We use "unease" too much as a discernment. But we need to ask a second question when experiencing unease, 'Is this about my comfort and not wanting to grow? Or is it truly about something morally evil?'

- **Unease**

"The uneasiness is not a sign you're doing it wrong. In fact, just as with pregnancy, it's a sign you're on the right track."

SCOTT'S THREE QUESTIONS FOR US?

1. What is the conversation I can have only by being in this situation?

2. What parts of my life have I been able to uncover only by finding myself here?

3. What unexpected place might God want to meet me in during this uneasy time I'm experiencing?

NEXT STEPS