

December 12, 2023
10th Day of Advent

Read [Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19](#)

When I bought my house in 2020, one of the first purchases I made was a brand new Christmas Tree from QVC. I had searched long and hard for the “perfect” tree and I truly believed I had found it. It fit in the corner of my living room like a glove and complimented the fireplace beautifully. My favorite feature, which is what led me to purchasing this (rather pricey) tree, was that it had a remote with what felt like an infinite number of different lighting options. I could change how the tree looked as often as I wanted. The lights could be all-white, all-color, red and white, blue and white, red and green, and so on. The lights could twinkle, blink, fade in and out, and shine at any pace and speed I desired...all thanks to the tiny remote that accompanied the tree. This tree, in my mind, truly felt like the ultimate Christmas tree.

Fast forward to December 2021 – my second Christmas season with this tree. The tree had been set up and stood in all its glory just like the year prior. One evening, Austin and I needed to run a quick errand and decided that Mally, the older of our two dogs, did not need to go in her crate because we would only be gone for 10 minutes or so. When we returned, we found Mally on the couch, and next to her, was a half-eaten Christmas tree remote, which she retrieved by stealthily climbing *onto* the coffee table from the couch while we were away.

To say I was crushed, was an understatement. The remote no longer worked, which meant all of the features that made the tree special and unique could no longer be activated. Feeling terrible that “his dog-child” caused this, Austin spent weeks searching for a replacement remote (or even a new tree) but after learning that the company who made that tree had gone out of business due to the pandemic, it became clear that this tree was not going to be restored to its former glory.

It sounds silly to grieve over the reality that an object could not be restored to its former condition – but how often do we find ourselves reminded of or grieving over what once was rather than focusing on what is now and what is yet to come?

Psalm 80 tells of the Israelites' plea to God to bring healing and restoration to Israel. When we pray to God asking for healing and restoration, we often do so in human terms. We ask that God would bring the healing and restoration that *we* desire, rather than what God knows to be necessary. Our grief is real and God hears the cries of our hearts but we must remember that God is constantly at work and making things new even if we cannot yet see it.

As Austin and I set up the “once perfect” tree this year, I found myself seeing the newness that has been brought into my life since first purchasing the tree. What was once “my” tree is now “our” tree. The white lights no longer illuminate my ornaments but a collection of ornaments and memories that reflect the family Austin and I have been building for the last few years – which includes the reminder of how devious dogs can be when left unattended. The tree may not be restored to what it once was but it has been made new into what it is now, which at the end of the day, is what truly makes it the “perfect” Christmas tree.

As you prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christchild, may you be open to the ways God’s healing and restorative presence are at work in your life and in the lives of those around you.

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