

Voices: Mourn the dark and shine the light

December 18, 2020

Our country recently passed 300,000 deaths due to COVID-19.

300,000.

That number is unfathomable.

300,000.

Think about the sheer size of that number, the families who are grieving, and the communities that never will be the same.

Just imagine for a moment how this pandemic forever has changed us, and experts say this number will rise steadily throughout the winter.

Yet, it seems to me we have not even begun to reckon with the sickness and death. We have not looked at the reality.

Hope begins with reality

Instead, we have tried to discount the loss, make fun of restrictions and downplay the truth right in front of our faces.

Yes, we are people of hope and not fear. Yes, we should hold on to the truth of the sovereignty of God even in the midst of sickness and suffering, but we also must recognize the pain and hurt around us.

It is a time to honor those who have lost their lives, celebrate those who have fought this virus and sit with those who grieve.

Why have we had no national mourning for this pandemic? Why hasn't the church pushed for this national mourning?

If we truly are people of hope, then we can face the hard reality of the brokenness and evil of this world and this virus, and we can comfort those who mourn with our presence and peace.

There is a time to rejoice and a time to mourn. Now, it is time to mourn.

We need pastors in this moment

As Christians, and especially as leaders within the church, we are called to comfort those who suffer and those who grieve, to be the hands and feet and ears of Jesus to the hurting around us.

I have noticed how many of the conversations around church leadership and the pandemic are about how to lead the church in the post-pandemic world. We are given how-to principles, and the leadership machine just keeps churning. But we don't need entrepreneurs in this moment; we need pastors.

Before we move on to the next how-to, we need to stop and seek to be a pastoral presence to those whose lives feel like they may not move on from this pandemic. We need to be faithful to those who still are dealing with the effects of being sick, the grief of losing a loved one, the shock of not being able to be near a loved one in the hospital.

The how-to will be there, and the principles of leadership for the future can wait. Right now, we need pastoral care. We need compassion.

We need to come together and accept the reality of the loss we collectively have felt. Those who have faced COVID-19 on the frontlines need to know we hear them, we love them, and we are with them.

A time to shine the light in the darkness

In this season of Advent, we recognize the darkness, and we look toward the coming light. We are in the middle of a dark season, and too many of us downplay the darkness.

This moment calls for a church that meets those in the darkness and points them toward the light.

It doesn't need a church more consumed with partisan politics than with the hurting around us. It doesn't need a church needlessly divided over small measures of prevention. It doesn't need another social media post.

We are people of the light. May we go into the darkness of the moment, recognize the reality of the darkness and shine the light of Jesus. He came to us. He comforted us. He is with us.

As the body of Christ, may we mourn with those who mourn, and may we shine the light of the gospel into the darkness of this winter.

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