



## Grain

“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.” —Abraham Lincoln

## Field

30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” 34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”[b] 35 The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born[c] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38 Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her. Luke 1:26-38

## Thoughts

What is possible? Just ask Mary and Elizabeth. The above Gospel text is filled with unexpected hope, leaving us to ask what is possible for ourselves. Abraham Lincoln dared to conceive more unity when he implored citizens of a polarized nation to answer to their “better angels.” Today, what is possible when we are so split over partisan politics and views on safety during the pandemic? Recently a pastor from Brodhead posted a message about some deeply concerning church divisions, as expressed below.

Rev. Peder Johanson wrote, "PSA for anyone connected to a church: This has been a hard year for pastors, especially in denominations where care and concern for public health has led to building closures. I have noticed in recent weeks an increase in the frequency and severity of heartbreaking stories from colleagues: Pastors being threatened with their job if they don't hold in-person worship, against the better judgment of national/state/local health officials and advice of their bishops. Secret meetings taking place to intimidate and bully pastors and those who support them. Unsolicited (and frankly, unhelpful) critique of the digital content they are doing their very best to create every week. Complaints or suggestions that raise expectations without offering any help to make it happen. And remember, most of us never even tried creating such content and are doing it for an audience that wasn't even familiar with accessing or consuming it to begin with. And while I haven't been recording a tally, I am all but certain the majority of pastors taking the biggest hits are women..." PSA Full Text

I read Rev. Peder's words on the heels of interviewing a staff from Braver Angels, an organization that has many stories of bringing people at opposite ends of perspectives together to answer to their better angels, assisting participants to engage with each other in the midst of their differences. Of course, divisions followed Jesus, but so did a deeper unity and hope. During the rest of Advent, my spiritual exercise is to regularly ponder the question, “What is possible?” Feel free to join me. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy