

The year of 2020 took so much, but I can't think about the things I grieved without appreciating the gifts I celebrated. I was laid off for months, but in the time I had free, I rediscovered my passion for creating. I was cut off from family and friends, yet I saw all of the innovative ways we found to connect virtually. I wasn't able to worship with my church family, but I was able to encounter God at home. 2020 took so much, but it also put a giant arrow on all of the things that actually mattered. Connection. Love. Physical touch. Intentionality. Peace. Gratitude. Equality. Listening. 2020 took so much, but it also exposed darkness. Racism. Child sex-trafficking. Division. Inequality. The reality is that our world before 2020 lost a few valuables along the way. We got too busy, we got too caught up in everything, and we got too complacent in the everyday. We forgot to cherish and value one another. 2020 was painful, depressing, hard.. but it gave us back some of those things we lost on our journey. We are resilient. We are strong. We are beautifully human. This life isn't black and white. It's gray and every color in between. There are so many complexities, so many mysteries.. Yet in the midst, we keep moving. After this year, I can't go back to just going through the motions. I learned to trust in the Lord and His ability to take care of me. I learned that the way to fully live is to do it passionately and do the things that make you come alive. I learned that I can't live this life without doing it authentically and honestly. I learned that being vulnerable and real is actually strength. I learned that I can't withhold my love anymore, it is far to important to give. I learned that I can't be blind to injustice, I love my neighbors too much. I learned to support small businesses. I learned to support people. I learned that sometimes we do ridiculous things to believe in each other. We sacrifice. We hold up. We listen. We encourage. We cry. We laugh. We celebrate. We experience every emotion and don't take any of them for granted, understanding that they all make life wonderful. I will never be the same, and I don't want to be.. Because 2020 made me better. 2020 was the refiner's fire and it was hot as hell. But as the impurities rose to the surface, I knew that we were left with gold. To the ones we lost, we remember. To the ones still here, we remember. Grief and joy entangled forever. As weird as it is to utter these words: thank you 2020, the year where we remembered to see.

Taylor Marie Johnson