

Good morning and Malo elei lei,

This week's article is an excerpt from *Hope is Found*. I pray these daily devotions are enriching your experience of this Advent season!

-Pastor Daniel

*"In God we live, move, and exist." Acts 17:28a*

"Dancing CATS... on a COAT RACK???"

"Dancing cats on a coat rack?"

"Dancing cats on a coat rack."



This is all that I can think as I sit in the middle of my parents living room with all of the eyes of my extended family on me. From across the room I catch glances from my mother and my grandmother. They have great hope and expectation in their eyes. My cousins and my uncle are looking at me with deep pity in their eyes. My dad and brother are still shocked and their faces haven't moved in what feels like forever.

I don't know what to do. Do I cry? Do I laugh? Is this a prank? Am I at the center of an elaborate joke, or are they really being serious?

I'm a 19 year old college student and I have just opened my Christmas present from my grandmother. Gifts from grandma are often the highlight of Koos family Christmas, and the gifts are often memorable. This is certainly memorable. What sits before me is a dancing cat coat rack ready to be mounted to the wall of my first college apartment. There are cats of all kinds; brown cats, black and white cats, and orange cats. And they are all doing the can-can with their arms wrapped around their shoulders, one leg lifted high to hold the coats. It is a sight to see.

I don't want to be judgmental of the "cat" people for whom this was manufactured - in fact it would have been a lovely gift for your favorite 85 year old "cat lady" - but for a 19 year old who hated cats and was still trying to find his way in the world, it was an epic FAIL (sorry Grandma!).

While this story was painful in the moment and caused me to wonder how well my family knew me, in recent years this story has taken its place in the canon of stories we tell when we get together as a family at Christmas. Today we laugh. We smile, and in the telling of the story we are reminded of the power of Christmas to unite us as a family even when we think that everything has gone wrong.

When we allow ourselves to tell our stories, even the difficult ones, we are blessed to discover that hope is found in the stories we tell.