

Advent and Christmas 2018

Dear

In our contemporary world by the time we get to Christmas Eve and Christmas day we are done! The Christmas Decorations were already in the stores before Halloween, we had Christmas music on the radio by mid-November, the Santa Parades began in late November and everybody has tried to squeeze the Christmas cheer out of us by the time we get to the 24th of December. But having a four year old is teaching me to enjoy Christmas and all the excitement because I am seeing it through fresh eyes, but I really miss Advent and the fullness of Christmas into the New Year and the wonder of Epiphany.

In the church calendar we have four weeks of Advent before Christmas begins and then we have two weeks of Christmas before Epiphany (which includes tons of the stories and symbols that we have pulled into Christmas). Sometimes I wish I could put the brakes on Christmas and enjoy it when it arrives, have a “proper” Advent and keep the wise men for Epiphany. It might also give me a chance to get balance around the season as I grapple with the flip-side of Christmas in the reality of poor teenage couple being compelled to travel under precarious circumstance for the sake of the administrative requirements of an violent Empire, giving birth to a child in a grubby stable, the horrors of the Feast of the Holy Innocents and the frightening flight of Jesus and his parents to Egypt as refugees.

I have realized, like in so many things associated with faith in the public-private divide of the society which we live in, that I can both enjoy all the hype and enthusiasm of the cultural Christmas handed to me and find time to work my way through the church calendar as best I can. But that takes an intentionally on my part not to be a Scrooge, a willingness to be flexible by not trying to wrestle Christmas back from popular culture, and focus and commitment to carve out a space to find my Christian rootedness.

My hope and prayer is that you can find the fullness of Advent and Christmas in the blessedness of all the celebration and you still have energy and fascination left to journey into the wonder of Epiphany.

Merry Christmas