

Advent Devotional

by Todd Clark

This Precious Moment

This is the season that draws many to gather in holy, peaceful, joyous contemplation of a world-changing miracle—to celebrate a birth that changed everything. It is a time of year which gracefully and powerfully compels us to prayer and to moments of deep faith traditions—old time, familiar and comforting rituals that tell us and teach us, and which can allow us, to slow down and be in that peaceful, wonderful moment of celebrating a blessed birth. And it's also a time that begins a dizzying race to get the tree up! and all of the shopping done!

It is indeed a unique time of frenzied distractions and discordant contradictions—a Holy Birth and Cyber Monday Sales—and most of all, days of overwhelming commitments and responsibility—a hundred separate details of simply making sure the season “works” and happens on time:

- indoor and outdoor decorations that go up, (or don't)
- family and friends that re-connect, perhaps visited or hosted, (with all of the fun, frenzy and also, alas, old conflicts and simmering frictions that may get churned up)
- and all the while numerous expectations keep going up, up, up that it all works out
- that we make it special for ourselves and others
- a compulsion that we must tend to each task that has kicked into place—

and on top of all that we are flooded with reminders and memories that come from dozens of years of these same rituals and traditions, many of which continue to bring sweet joy and others that may not be happening in the exact same precious ways as they had before, or could never now happen again as they once did—because of loss, or change, or just the way things worked out.

And yet there can be (and needs to be) holy rest and respite and deep renewal—simple moments, carved out of busy days which beckon us to pause and listen to the story of this miracle. Those are some of the most wonderful and truly remarkable gifts we can give to ourselves and others: the chance to find wonder again. It may be in the simple joy of placing an age old, cherished, perhaps even home-made star, atop a sparkling tree, or

- or to let yourself be lovingly swayed by oh so familiar carols, sung gently and softly among brightly flickering candles
- the profound, life-changing moment of hearing that special story one more time
- of a straw-filled manger that was hurriedly found late one night, which soon after, welcomes a babe in swaddling clothes, and then travelers arrive with gifts from afar
- and the news is spread that a child is born—that there is peace on earth. It came upon a midnight clear...on this silent night, this holy night—when all is calm... and we once again embrace this birth miracle...



This is the precious moment that we trust and wait for—that we know, with faith, will happen again this year, whether we missed the big clearance sales or are late for midnight service or we are watching it on line, or even perhaps that we have been sitting in church—having arrived early—just wanting to be there.

Now is the time to connect to our heart and soul, to feel love and loved, and to revel in the gift of life and salvation that we have been given, knowing that this is what really matters. This is what we have been determined to look for and if we can just pause and listen, and make some room, amidst the clutter and distractions—this blessed moment will find us. That is indeed the Christmas miracle.