

Presbytery of Redstone
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This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem

"Are you ready for Christmas?" The inquiry occurs naturally this time of the year with the expectation of necessary preparations for all the festivities of family gatherings, gift-giving, and celebrations. Inevitably, I am unable to answer in the affirmative. Nearly, two thousand years ago, others were asked by the prophet in the wilderness, are you ready for his coming?

This journey of Advent is a story of our own preparation. It is the preparation for the long view, not merely a time of celebration of carols and decorations and gifts. Are we prepared for the radical notion of God coming in the flesh? For a kingdom unlike any other and one brought about through humility and characterized by peace.

In Advent, we straddle the paradox of the already and not yet. We celebrate the birth of an infant king, yet in, we still long for the peaceable kingdom. We easily sing out praises when we should also cry out in penitence. Our Advent consciousness makes us ever more aware of the needs for which the redeemer comes. Hope, peace, joy and love come not by our changing circumstances or seasons, but by the action of our God. God plants the seed of a harvest to come. Henri Nouwen, wrote the "secret of waiting is the faith that the seed has been planted, that something has begun." We wait knowing Christ's kingdom has begun, often in hidden ways.

At this Christmas celebration, may we understand that a gift was given that we could not have needed or wanted more. God remembered and acted, and God will remember and act. So, as we journey in Advent, let us be "Bethlehem-bound." In just a few of the words from Ann Weems poem, "In Search of Our Kneeling Places."

*When we are Bethlehem-bound
we experience our own advent in his.
When we are Bethlehem-bound
we can no longer look the other way
conveniently not seeing the stars
nor hearing angel voices.
We can no longer excuse ourselves by busily
tending our sheep or our kingdoms.
This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem
and see this thing that the Lord has made known to us.
In the midst of shopping sprees
let's ponder in our hearts the Gift of Gifts.
Through the tinsel
let's look for the gold of the Christmas Star.
In the excitement and confusion, in the merry chaos,
let's listen for the brush of angels' wings.
This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem
and find our kneeling places.*

On behalf of the Presbytery of Redstone, I wish for you that we all might "got to Bethlehem and find our kneeling places." Have a blessed, joyous and hope-filled Christmas!!!

Rev. Skip Noftzger, Executive Presbyter



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