Advent Devotional 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Auburn, Week of November 27th

Preparing to Kneel in Bethlehem

Too often our answer to the darkness
is not running toward Bethlehem
but running away.

Throughout this holiday season of scurry, we are likely to welcome help as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, to seek that light amidst darkness. We will need to slow down occasionally, to reflect on the miracles surrounding us and the Miracle that will occur again this year, in just a few weeks.

Ann Weems (1934-2016), a Presbyterian elder, writer, speaker, and liturgist, raised her hand to volunteer to help us by composing a series of poems about Advent, Kneeling in Bethlehem (Westminster Press, 1980). She wrote those poems out of the conviction that "each of us awaits expectantly the birth of Christ in this place, this time. We will not give Christmas away to commercialism or to the past. For Christians, the Advent is now and here."

Each week during Advent you will find one of Weems' poems here in our newsletter, accompanied by a brief commentary by me and some Scripture and reflection questions by one of our pastors.

In this week's poem, Weems challenges us to seek our Christmas Peace by confronting whatever darkness lies between that Peace and us. Only when we face that darkness, she says, will we be able "to see the Light of the World." We can achieve that, in part, by "running toward Bethlehem."

What will reaching Bethlehem require of you this year?

Terry Ley

"Toward the Light"

Too often our answer to the darkness
is not running toward Bethlehem
but running away.
We ought to know by now that we can't see
where we're going in the dark.
Running away is rampant...
separation is stylish:
separation from mates, from friends, from self.
Run and tranquilize,
don't talk about it, avoid.
Run away and join the army
of those who have already run away.
When are we going to learn that Christmas Peace
comes only when we turn and face the darkness?
Only then will we be able to see
the Light of the World.

Ann Weems

For Reflection

Scripture:
Micah 7:7-8 "But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Do not rejoice over me, my enemies; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me."

Questions:
When is a time you have chosen to "face the darkness" (as Weems writes) or "sit in darkness" (Micah 7:8)?

How do we understand the light and love of Christ differently when we have come through an experience of darkness?

Prayer: Lord of Light and Love, give me courage when darkness comes. May I face that which I fear in anticipation of your light. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.