Normally, I'm all-in on Advent. I love its pace and its posture—this intentional slowing, this quiet insistence that we hold space for longing before stepping into celebration. Most years, that rhythm feels like a welcome deep breath.

But this year has been different.

Even though we're only a few days into the season, I've realized I'm coming into Advent already tired from a year that has felt like one long stretch of waiting. Not the calm, patient sort—but the active, anxious kind. The kind where you're scanning the horizon for signs of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, and wondering whether you're missing them or whether they're simply taking their time.

It's not a loss of faith or confusion about the church calendar.

It's more an acknowledgment that my soul feels like it's been in Advent mode since March—holding questions, carrying concerns, listening for something that hasn't quite taken shape.

And I wonder if others are feeling something similar.

Individuals, households, even whole congregations can find themselves in this place: restless, searching, waiting without knowing exactly what we are waiting for. That subtle inner hum that isn't overwhelming but also refuses to go away.
As I've sat with that, I've begun to wonder whether this kind of waiting might not be as out of place in Advent as it feels. I'm reminded that not every season of anticipation is serene. Sometimes waiting feels like wandering—like walking a road whose turns you can't predict, with only enough light to see a few steps ahead. In a strange way, that kind of waiting may bring us closer to the heart of the story we're preparing to hear again.

Bethlehem's road wasn't bright or straightforward. It was long, winding, and uncertain. It was traveled by people who carried their own fears, their own questions, their own hopes they could barely name. Perhaps our own wandering makes us better companions to theirs.

And maybe—just maybe—there's something in our unsettled paths that helps us listen more deeply. When hope feels both near and far, when peace feels both promised and elusive, when joy flickers instead of blazes, we might find ourselves more in touch with what countless generations of faithful people have known: God often comes to us not in clarity, but in the longing for it.

So as this Advent unfolds, perhaps there is room to see our restlessness not as failure, but as invitation. An invitation to be honest about where we are. To listen for what keeps rising in our spirits. To walk gently with one another when our communities feel stretched or uncertain. To pay attention to whatever small lights appear along the way, even if they illuminate no more than the next right step.

If wandering ends up being part of the pilgrimage this year, maybe that's not something to resist.

Maybe wandering softens us.
Maybe wandering opens our eyes.
Maybe wandering is its own kind of prayer.
And maybe, in the quiet stretches of that wandering, the star becomes just a little easier to see.

For me, and for us, I pray that it may be so.

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