

“Sometimes the old myth is right, the light has gone out of the world, you can see plainly in your heart and its hungry darkness, the aimless grief, a heavy echo of something missing, or someone,

not lighting, like a mood or a utility, but a source, life itself, and its warmth. Something like the friendship of the earth. Not exactly breath, but essential. Emperors are lost. Roads vanish.

You need to plead. Someone needs to fetch it. Someone needs to assail the fearful thief who has stolen the light and hidden it, buried it in the darkest place where no one can go, no one can find it, no one can return. Someone innocent and honest, brave enough to be true and risk everything, to set off with nothing but a fish hook and a loaf of bread to find the light for us who hunger for it, and for the trees who wait in silence.

On the longest night when even the angels can stand it no longer, God sends a child, tender and willing, (and a mother who offers him to this dark world), a child with nothing but love saying, “I will go into your darkest places for you and there, there, I will draw out the light.”

The harsh wind clamping down, the threat already issued, soldiers on the move, the child comes into the night, facing the darkness. His mother sings, and he begins his journey, and already he has a bit of light in his hands, and already the night begins to turn and the stars dance and the angels sing and your heart begins to rise like the long-lost morning sun.”¹

We have heard the gospel story tonight from Luke’s perspective, from a current poet’s perspective, Steven Garnaas-Holmes, and even Isaiah sums it up in one verse: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined” (v.2). Although different perspectives, the message is the same: God comes to us in light and love to overcome the darkness.

There have been many journeys made in order to arrive at this moment for the Christ child to be born. Mary and Joseph made the long, arduous journey of 90 miles on foot, up through the Judean mountains, across the desert, nine months pregnant, only to arrive with no place to stay.

The Angel arrived to the Shepherds to deliver the message of great joy that has come into the world. The Shepherds made their journey and arrived in Bethlehem to see “this thing” for themselves. Even Jesus, made his journey to be with us here on earth, to teach us a better way to live, to show us how to truly love. Advent is a time for us to make this journey ourselves, to Bethlehem, to the manger, traveling through the desert times and climbing the steep mountains, so that we arrive at this moment, for Christ to be born in us.

From my own personal journey, I connect with this painting called, *The Nativity* (1891) by Gary Melchers. After Mary’s long journey to Bethlehem and even longer journey of childbirth, she is completely exhausted. I imagine she lacks

¹ Steve Garnaas-Holmes, “Winter Solstice”
<https://www.unfoldinglight.net/>

the strength to even hold up her head. And, the perplexed look on Joseph's face. I imagine he is asking, "What do I do now? How do I do this?" They made their journey. They arrived with physical and emotional exhaustion, yet the light of Christ shines on them. In their darkest, Christ is with them. Because they made their journey to Bethlehem and Christ was born, we too can have the light of Christ shine on us.

Tonight, we celebrate that Jesus arrives into the world for us. Isaiah 9:6 says: "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us." Luke 2:11: "To YOU is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." It was all for US. All of this is for us. Because nothing but God's light and love can illuminate our darkness.

If you weren't able to take your journey to Bethlehem during Advent, no worries. God loves us so much, that we can start the journey any time. We can start right now. It is with God's grace and God's timing that we arrive when we arrive. And, when we do, Christ will be born in us, and we can take that light into the world.