

Nativity of the Lord

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Isaiah 9:2, *The Message*

Bring gifts and celebrate, bow before the beauty of God,
Then to your knees—everyone worship

Psalms 96:8-9, *The Message*

And Mary said, I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.

Luke 1:46b, *The Message*

Anticipation. Miriam Webster defines it as “a feeling of excitement about something that is going to happen” and “the act of preparing for something.” Isn't this what Christmas Eve is all about...er...should be all about? When did it become all about last minute buying frenzies and frantic meal preparations and “traditions” that, if not followed, will bring the world to an end? Ironically, non-Christians and occasional Christians participate in this bizarre ritual every year as well. Sadly, those of us who should understand and appreciate the fact that our gift has already been given to us also fall prey.

Do you remember Christmas Eve when you were a child? The quiver of excitement at the thought of the next morning and the celebration of this wonderful day called Christmas? I don't know about you, but it really wasn't so much about the presents (we didn't have many!) as it was the “specialness” of the day: Waking up to the smell of the turkey roasting, looking forward to Grandma and Grandpa's arrival, board-games or cards around the table later on, and everyone just staying at home all day.

As adults, do we still look to Christmas with anticipation, or are we dreading it because we still haven't found the perfect gift for our spouse, or because the house is still a mess and “all those relatives” are coming, or...we are missing someone who won't be with us this year...or any future years. If this is what Christmas is all about for you, then you will miss the thankful anticipation of Mary as she prepares for the birth of her son and our savior. You will miss the hopeful anticipation of the Israelites when Isaiah's (60:1) prophecy pronounced, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.” You will miss the joyful anticipation of the Psalmist (96:13) who said, “Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes.” No matter what, we are about to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ. I hope you are looking forward to tomorrow with thankful, hopeful and joyful anticipation!

Prayer: Lord, as we approach the celebration of your son's birth, fill our hearts with joyful, hopeful and thankful hearts. Amen

Kathy Drake

Additional Scriptural Readings: Isaiah 9: 2-7; Psalm 96; Luke 2: 1-14, 15-20