

A Moment of Peace. Devotion for Dec. 9, 2020

The other night I did something that I have not done for over a year at least, though I cannot remember for certain whether I did it last year or not, but it is something that I can remember my mother doing from time to time in the holiday season. It is going to sound funny, because its not something elaborate or really all that exciting what I did was sit in our living room, all by myself with all the lights turned out except for the lights of our Christmas tree. The kids and my wife were all in their beds sound asleep, but mind was racing. I was thinking about what I needed to get for Christmas services, who I should phone and touch base with, what cards I needed to write, what if any gifts still needed to be ordered and what I need to organize for my kids' online school the next morning; all that stuff was keeping me from sleep, so I sat on our couch in the dark of the night illuminated by the lights of the Christmas tree. I needed that moment of peace more than I even knew. I must have sat there for over an hour, trying to quiet everything in my mind and instead just simply be.

As I mentioned, I can recall peaking around the corner at night when I was kid and seeing my mother just sitting and looking at the tree and it always worried me, because to me it looked like she was lonely, and maybe she was, but now I also understand that from time to time we all need a space and place to quite our minds and our hearts and to just sit and listen. We need a place not to mentally check our to do lists, but rather to listen to the whispers of our hearts. Maybe more than ever before we need to find places where we can just be. Places where we can be free to let go of our burdens, let go of our worries and concerns and even let go of our joys and just simply be in peace.

What we are learning in this time of pandemic is that those places are few and far between. For example, the church and worship used to be a time when you could come into the church, sit in a pew and just be present and listen to the call of your hearts, but for now at least, we cannot do that. For some sitting in the local coffee shop, enjoying a coffee or a tea and watching the people pass by aided in that calming of the soul, but now that sitting and waiting and watching people is no longer allowed. Even our homes, our places of solitude and safety, though still very much those things, have also become places where we reside for most of our day and carving out that quiet time and that calming time in what can feel like Grand Central Station can be incredibly hard.

Often I think we believe, particularly in the Advent season, that if we busy ourselves with preparing and getting everything done, somehow the peace of the season will find us. The truth is it does not work that way. We must enable ourselves the moments to enter that peace. They're always around us, but we need to stop long enough to see them and feel them and know that God peace is there. Which is why, much later than I should have, I sat on our couch drinking a cup of hot chocolate and said nothing to anyone. I barely moved an inch and just enjoyed the peace and silence illuminated in the lights and memories reflected on our Christmas tree.

We all know that Advent is the season of waiting, but its not just a season of waiting for Christmas morning. The waiting and preparing can also be about finding space and time to enter the hope and peace of God's presence. God is always around us, but often we are so busy and consumed by so much stuff, that we simply do not notice that presence or ignore it all together. Often its only when we make space in our busy lives, or when we calm the noise of our everyday, that we then hear the silent whispers of God's grace around us. This season sometimes forces us to do it, but it is a practise of self care that we all need in all our seasons.

Maybe for you that peace is found while walking in creation or a visiting with an old friend on the phone. Maybe it's a cup of coffee on the deck or a drive in the country. Maybe for you its sitting by a lit Christmas tree or picking up your guitar and strumming a few chords or drawing a bath and reading a good book. Whatever and wherever it is, we all need to find those times and places in our lives; times when we can just let the rest of the world wait and can recharge our souls with the grace and wisdom of peace. I sincerely hope that over the coming days you can find something, no matter what it is, to connect with the calm and enduring presence of God. For my friends God is always there and ready, its up to us to make time to stop everything else and notice.

Sincerely,

Rev. Adam Hall