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A TIME FOR WONDER



CHRISTMAS
BECKONS US
WITH WONDER

How the incarnation of Christmas
can change our perspective.

BY ISAAC GAY

MY IN-LAWS LIVE on three acres in western New York. A creek runs behind their house, holding the memories of my wife and her siblings playing in it as children. Their laughter is now echoed by the giggles of our children. Rows of evergreens line the property, enfolding the highs, lows, and nuances of family life. One winter's night, as I strolled through the snow piled on the path and in the branches, my mind drifted to a vision of the "age to come." As millions of snowflakes with their unique expression of God's creative genius fell around me, I was once again introduced to wonder.

The French word *inspirer*, the source of the English word *inspiration*, is literally translated as *breath*. In the pause between our breaths, we are once in a while brought to a place of inspiration where we can observe what was previously hidden to us; our eyes glimpse the new that will one day be revealed.

As we see through the eyes of children, inspiration and wonder are the original postures of the human soul—as Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15, ESV). The poet Dylan Thomas put it this way: "Children in wonder watching the stars / Is the aim and the end." As mature, regulated adults, we often find ourselves neglecting everyday wonder and conserving it as a response most appropriate to the monumental and palatial. We compartmentalize our day-to-day living and can easily lose the sense of humble availability that allows children

to engage with the world around them in wonder. If we're not careful, our pride, pragmatism, and self-dependence can strip us of the essence that makes us most human, causing us to shut our eyes to the wonder that children see so easily.

The story of God's incarnation invites a childlike posture of wonder. Amid presuppositions of a kingly birth, Christ is born into unremarkable circumstances. Much like those who awaited the Messiah at the time, our modern eyes would have overlooked Bethlehem in favor of Jerusalem. We would have ignored the shepherds on the hillside as we do beggars on the streets, looking instead for the expected grandeur of glory. But when we come to the scene of the baby lying in the manger, we find the epitome of wonder. Redirecting our gaze back to the humble and wonderful, God meets humanity in the most mundane of ways. The Incarnation reminds us that as we pause, our ability to stand in wonder is no longer predicated on magnitude, but is available in monotony.

As we gather with our loved ones and enter into the season of lights and holly, sleigh bells and nativity, it is good to gaze at the elementary; to stand in wonder during a snowfall, to delight in the taste of freshly baked pastries, to laugh along to the sound of children playing, and to answer the door to childlike faith that wonder can open. Not only do we find Christ there, but we find him inviting us to share in the way he sees the world he has created. ■

REFLECT



Reflect on a moment in your life when you experienced a profound sense of wonder or awe. What was happening around you, and how did that experience deepen your appreciation for God's beauty and power?



The devotional mentions the importance of receiving the kingdom of God like a child. How can you cultivate a childlike posture of wonder in your own life, especially during the Advent season?