



Advent Reflection for Friday, December 8, 2023

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Isaiah 9:2-7

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.
You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Great will be his authority, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Today's Reflection is by Zach Parkman

I am an early riser. As difficult as it is to rouse myself out of bed some mornings, I do love the quiet solitude and contemplative nature of the predawn hours. It feels like I have stepped outside of time for a moment, before the hubbub and chaos of the New York City day begins. It is a brief moment when anything is possible, like before a race when it is possible that anyone could be a winner (or loser, sadly) and the outcome isn't set in stone.

That's what jumps out at me from this reading. The imagery of darkness and the knowledge or premonition that the dawn (or a great light) is just ahead. A new day is beginning. Everything is reset. All the failures of yesterday, all the disappointments, all the sadness. I get to try again.

That's what Christ represents for me, an endless stream of new days in which to try again. Because I will inevitably fail at something. Despite my best intentions and my greatest attempts. I am human. I am fallible. I am imperfect. I am clumsy with my words and actions. But that is OK, because as long as I look to the example of Christ and try to walk in his footsteps I get to keep trying and I keep getting better. Practice makes perfect.

Christmas time is my favorite time of the year. It is cold, it is dark. Sometimes it is absolutely miserable, but we are all in it together. It is a great equalizer. Everyone is suffering together. Just like life. It is a reminder to me to be kinder and more patient. To reach out and help someone if I seem them struggling. Sometimes I'm not so kind or patient and that's OK too. I get to try again.

I don't think it is a coincidence that we celebrate the birth of Christ in the coldest and darkest time of the year. (at least those of us that live in the Northern Hemisphere) It is a time when it seems like the sun is leaving us, the wind wants to rip us to shreds and the silence of the night is like the foretelling of the end of the world.

And then Christmas morning arrives and everyone (or at least my children) are excited and happy and full of curiosity and joy. For a moment it feels like I am young again too. Like the burden and responsibilities of life have been lifted. That all of the toil and hardship

of the past year have been culminating in this moment. A new day. A reminder that all is not lost. That I live in a beautiful, loving and gracious world, if I choose to live in that world.



Zach Parkman lives in Kensington with his wife Kim and their 2 children Adelaide and Gideon. They have been attending This Little Light at Holy Apostles since 2019.