

**Are You Ready?**  
**A Meditation for Christmas Eve 2017**

So here we are. Almost Christmas.  
Most of us have spent the last several weeks getting ready.  
Trees bought and decorated.  
Gifts bought and wrapped.  
Holiday parties.  
Family gatherings.  
Cookies left out for Santa.  
Cards and letters sent far and wide.  
All wonderful.

And here we are. In this place.  
Together with family and friends and neighbors.  
Which is as it should be.  
Together we sing the familiar carols.  
We light and hold our candles.  
We retell that age old story.  
Silent Night. Holy Night.  
Wondrous star led thy light. With the angels let us sing.  
All beautiful. Take it in.

But here's the thing.  
For all our preparation and for all the beauty around us I can't help but wonder if there is something more. Something we miss in all of our other planning and preparation. All of our decorations and gift giving. So much of what we spend time and energy and money on seems to have little to do with that simple, provocative, age old story we read together each year. A story so familiar we almost know it by heart.  
Gentle Mary. Stoic Joseph. Shepherds in the field abiding. Angels from the realms of glory.  
A story so layered over by tradition and Christmas card images and soften by the glow of candles that the meaning and the challenge the story presents gets lost in the pageantry of our celebration. You know the story, but maybe you miss the tension.  
Here it is.  
Caesar Augustus. Roman Emperor. Self proclaimed Son of God on one side.  
Jesus. Born in Bethlehem. Laid in a manger. Gospel proclaimed Son of God on the other side.  
King Herod in his palace and on his throne in Jerusalem.  
Or, Mary and Joseph making their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem.  
The Roman legions who patrol countryside and streets to impose their peace.  
Or, the heavenly hosts with their proclamation of *Peace on Earth. God's good will to all.*  
As we hear the story we are left to ask ourselves and then to decide.  
What is this story really trying to say?  
Which side of the story will we chose as our own to guide and direct our living?

And, because the Bible is never just about then, but also about now.  
And, never just about them, but also about you and me.  
And because I believe there is something more to Christmas than Santa and reindeer.  
I wonder...  
What does all this mean for us today?  
What does all this mean for you today?  
With the world as it is?  
With your life as it is?

So if any of this, on some level, rings true or tugs at your heart, let me ask.  
With everything else already neatly in place...

If there is something in this story about *Peace on Earth* which weaves itself around some deep longing within you, how is it you are going to get ready for that kind of Christmas?

If there is something in this story about everyone having a place and not just the rich and the powerful and something in the story which brings into focus how you imagine life and world might be. Should be. How is it you are going to get ready that kind of Christmas?

If there is something in this story about *God with us* which rings true; which tugs at your spirit.  
God with us...  
Not God over us.  
Not God judging us.  
Not God condemning us.  
*God with us* in this wonderful, complex, sorrowful, joyful thing we call life.  
God with you and me.  
God with us and them.  
God here.  
God now.  
Just as you are.  
Just as we are.  
Just as they are.

So, if there is something about this story...  
Something about Christmas  
Which is about more than trees and gifts and carols and cards  
Then let me ask...  
What are you doing to get ready for that kind of Christmas?