

# Advent Love: When Love Arrives, Be Sure You Don't Miss It

My daughter's anxiety about Christmas has heightened over the last several weeks.

"How long till Christmas, Mommy?"

I'm asked the same question multiple times a day as she has watched us decorate a tree, attend more services at church and host gatherings with Christmas music on replay in our home.

She's 2, so she doesn't understand the concept of time or really what Christmas is about just yet. But she is confident that she knows that she's ready for Christmas now.

She wants her stocking hanging on the fireplace to be full of M&Ms, most of all green and blue ones. She wants her family to all be at home. She wants to celebrate!

Her impatience with the fact that "it's not Christmas yet" reminds me in a small way of how those waiting for the first Christmas must have felt.

Consider this: Have you ever thought about how much time passes between the two parts of our Bible: The Old and New Testaments?

Did you know that it's a 400-year lapse? Four hundred years. Of silence. Of longing. Of waiting. Of watching and nothing happening.

That's close to 15 generations come and gone from the earth and still hoping. A lot of thinking about what it might be like when the Messiah came.

And then out of this abyss of silence comes this earth-shattering event in the

sleepy town of Bethlehem among two very young parents: Joseph and Mary – the promised Savior from David’s line was born.

Can you imagine what was going on in their heads as the labor began, continued and soon Jesus belted out his first cries?

Can you imagine how many years had they and their grandfathers and their great-grandmothers heard the prophecy about this Messiah?

Can’t you see them scratching their eyes wondering they were sure they heard right, that this baby was the Messiah, the one they’d prayed many prayers to receive for years? This baby now laid in their arms.

I am not sure what Mary and Joseph felt.

But I do know this: It’s often our human experience – when we arrive at something that we’ve waited a long time for – not to be fully present when it comes, especially when it is something as profound as love being born in our midst.

A couple years ago, I received a chance of a lifetime. My husband and I were invited to a White House Christmas party.

We were so excited, of course. I never imagined I would ever attend something so fancy. I picked out my clothes with an eye for detail. I counted down the days. I couldn’t wait for my eyes to see the president in the president’s house.

Soon after making our way through the long security line, the ushers announced that the president and his wife would be walking down the stairs to join the party, the stairs directly above our gaze.

What did I do next?

Of course, I opened the camera app on my phone (it’s what we do these days, right?). I couldn’t wait to post to Facebook a picture that would share my joy.

But, with my eyes perched solely on my phone trying to take the perfect picture, I snapped and snapped and snapped photographs only to look up and realize I never saw the president with my own eyes. He walked down the stairs and I didn't see him. And time was up. He was gone.

Even though I was so excited about this amazing moment in the days leading up to it, I let my preoccupation with the camera keep me from the joy when it actually happened.

This, I believe, can easily be our failing as Christmas Eve approaches, as we think about what it means to arrive at the manger too.

We might be in church or at home gathered with loved ones, but our souls aren't there. Our minds are somewhere else. And because of this, there's not space in our hearts to see.

Here's what I most want to offer you: Though it's so easy to focus on what's for dinner tomorrow night or how long the trip to grandma's might take or if our kids have enough gifts under the tree and then decide to make one more trip to the mall, let us not already be at New Year's in our minds.

Christmas is coming, a time to remember and celebrate God sending Jesus to live among us and show us how to be more loving, and there's no time to get our heads buried behind our phones.

For I have the best news to share: God with us is almost here!

And when the God who is love comes, I don't want to miss it. I want to see with my very eyes.

*Editor's note: This article is part of an Advent 2018 series focused on the traditional themes of hope, peace, joy and love. The previous articles in the series are:*

[\*Advent Hope: When All Appears Bleak, God's Grace Abounds\*](#) by Guy Sayles

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*[The Preacher's "Peace" at Advent](#) by Bill Tillman*

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