

Advent Presence

At this time when so many are hard at it procuring and preparing Christmas presents to give, I'd like share a simple reminder about the Christmas Presence already given us. Every Advent it strikes me as odd that we prepare for the coming of someone who is already with us, Emmanuel, "God with us." In Matthew's gospel the very last words Jesus speaks at his Ascension are *behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age*. In this declarative statement in the present tense, not just as a promise to be fulfilled in the future, Jesus tells us he is present with now and will be with us always. So, what are we doing and why when we pray and prepare and wait and hope for Jesus to come when he's already with us? I often hear people talk about how they want to "get closer" to God or Jesus. Whenever I hear this I respond that *it's not possible* for them to get any closer to God or Jesus than they already are. Our very life exists only by God's doing; were it not for God's constant creation of us, we wouldn't be at all. If we were removed from God even for a moment we would simply cease to exist. So, at one level, objectively speaking, we can not get any closer to God than we already are and always have been. And as Jesus said he is with us always. However, subjectively speaking, as much as God is already fully present to us, we are often not so present to God. God is with us, as a matter of fact. But we are not always with God, at the level of our awareness, consciousness, and concern. In our Advent prayer we do look forward to the "coming of Christ" and the "birth of the Savior," but where and how those things need to take place is within us, in our hearts and minds, day in and day out right here and now, not off in the future. God doesn't have to do anything different for Christ to come into our world and into our lives, we do.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.
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