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Advent: Ring the Bells that Still Can Ring

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Advent: Ring the Bells that Still Can Ring

Abstract

"Perhaps Advent is, in part, a season of remembering journeys in to strange lands and stories about loss."

Posting about faith in the Advent promise from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/advent-ring-the-bells-that-still-can-ring/>

Keywords

In All Things, Advent, waiting, promise, refugees

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

Advent: Ring the Bells that Still Can Ring

 [all in allthings.org/advent-ring-the-bells-that-still-can-ring/](https://allthings.org/advent-ring-the-bells-that-still-can-ring/)

Tanya De Roo

This is post 4 of 4 in the series “*Advent Devotions*”

1. [Advent: The Messy Preparation](#)
2. [Preparing, Advent and Psalm 51](#)
3. [Advent: Clearing a Path for Christmas](#)
4. Advent: Ring the Bells that Still Can Ring

A few weeks ago, our church had a special service to commemorate All Saints’ Day. Generations stood together and read a script that reminded us of the faithful that have come before us. Our family read the following lines:

The Israelites had faith, so they left Egypt and passed through the Red Sea when God divided the waters for them. They went through it as if it were dry land.

As I stood, holding my five-year-old son’s hand and waiting for the rest of the lines to be read, I began to imagine what this situation really meant for the Israelites. They were asked to pack a few things that they could carry and leave the only home they had ever known, on foot. Infants, children, parents, grandparents, widows, and the handicapped left Egypt for a place they had never seen, with no assurance of welcome or even of survival. It was truly a profound act of faith.

The Bible is full of stories of refugees fleeing oppression and violence, trusting that they are going to somewhere better, somewhere safe. Recently, our news has been full of these stories as well: images of desperate mothers, clutching freezing babies in unstable boats, risking death for the chance of life. Perhaps advent is, in part, a season of remembering journeys into strange lands and stories about loss. In a very real way, displacement, loss, journeys and poverty are a central part of our history, our faith story. They make up the foundation of our Christmas narrative. Our Christian narrative.

And yet, so often, my experience is the opposite. I am so bloated with privileges, with excess, with comfort, with security that I cannot even begin to relate to the images I see in the news, let alone act on them. I can’t even imagine what it might be to leave everything I know, in faith, to risk death, to pass through an ocean on the miracle of dry land, to march across a desert for forty years before finding a home, to have nothing, to not be welcomed or wanted, to huddle with my newborn baby in a stranger’s cold barn.

I wonder what it would take for my own heart to answer such a call? To give up the luxuries I have and the things I know, and bravely step into the unknown for a promise? Maybe it would take the desperation of a refugee, the feeling that leaving was my only hope for life. Maybe it would take following the example of the baby in the manger, who “gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form” (Philippians 2:7 NLT).

In his song, “Anthem,” Leonard Cohen writes:

You can add up the parts
But you won’t have the sum

You can strike up the march,
There is no drum
Every heart, every heart
To love will come
But like a refugee.

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

I wonder if the only way for any of us to access the truth of the Advent story, to understand what we are waiting for, to receive the promise, is to allow our hearts to feel the stripped-down desperation of an illegitimate, displaced, Middle Eastern baby in a manger. This advent, may we forget our perfect offerings, and allow our broken hearts to come to love, like a refugee.