

**2020**

# **Advent Devotional**

**Christmas Eve / Christmas Day**



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# WONDER

Christmas Eve / Christmas Day  
December 24/25, 2020

*Bring the family together and offer a simple prayer.  
You may read the one here or offer your own. Feel free  
to do each section in any order.*

“Open Me First!”

*Celebrating with Children*

## Story Time

Our story today is from Rev. Steve Petty. Click [HERE](#) to hear him read it. (Link: <https://youtu.be/TfGDZZglOk4>)

We sometimes wonder at Christmas why God would come to us as a child. Why not a powerful king? Why not a brilliant general with an army? Why did Jesus come as a child, just like all of us. Here is an old story that I think can reveal something to us about that question.

One Christmas Eve long ago a farmer decided to stay home while his wife and son drove into town for church services. He wasn't much of a church attender, so he thought he would just sit in his easy chair and enjoy the evening. It was a cold winter night and as he watched the car go down the driveway he could see it was just starting to snow.

A little while later while reading the Bible story of Jesus birth, the man thought he heard some knocking at the window, he went to peek through the curtains but saw nothing and no one. He thought he was hearing things! He added a log to the fire and sat back in his chair. But then there was some more knocking, and this time he could tell that it sounded more like tapping.

When he peeked through the curtains again he could see that a lot of snow was coming down and that the wind had picked up. But he could see nothing through the snow flurries.

He opened the front door to look directly at the front of the house. He saw some movement on the front lawn, which was now partly covered with snow. One bird was fluttering about, but as he looked closer he saw a whole flock of birds on his lawn. Some were flying up into his window, perhaps to seek shelter from the storm. Silly birds, he thought to himself and went back inside. But the pecking continued and it was getting annoying. They need to find a tree or some shelter, he thought.

So, the farmer put on his boots, big coat and hat and prepared to shoo them away. But the birds only fluttered about avoiding his boots and arms.

He tried flashing the lights. He tried turning off all the lights. He tried yelling at them, but nothing helped, they were lost and confused. Now the farmer was getting cold and tired too. He began to feel sorry for them, they seemed so lost and alone.

He thought, “if I can't get them to leave, maybe I can find them a safe place here.” He went and opened the big barn doors, turned on the lights and tried to move them into the barn, but again, they avoided his boots and ignored his flapping arms.

Now he was getting very worried about the little birds and afraid that they might freeze, so he went inside and got some bread crumbs, attempting to make a trail for the birds to follow into the barn. While some ate a few crumbs, they would not follow the trail away from the house.

The farmer felt so badly now, and he thought to himself, “If only I could become a bird just like them, I could tell them how much I care for them and I could show them how to find their way into the barn. I want them to live and be happy and sing for joy on sunny spring days to come. But I am not a bird, they will not follow me.”

Just then, from the town center, the church bells rang, announcing the birth of Jesus. The farmer thought, this must be how God feels.

The farmer loved the birds and would do anything to save them, but he cannot become a bird. God loves all the people and God has the power to come and be like one of us, to save us all. Jesus is born, a small baby, just exactly like each one of us were at one time. He will grow up, just like you children are growing up. And when he is old enough, he will teach us all how to live. He will lead us to safety.

## Prayer and Candle Lighting

Dear God, we thank you for bringing us into the light of Jesus. We began in the darkness and each week we have celebrated that there is more light. We have shared the Hope, Love, Joy and Peace of Christ coming to save us. Now, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Your love has come to fill our world. So, fill our lives this day O Lord. Let the love of Jesus light the world. (Light all four advent candles and the Christ Candle). Amen.

## Read the scripture

Luke 2:6-7 “While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

Expanded scripture: Luke 2:1-20 <https://bible.oremus.org/?ql=475677058>

## Closing Song: Silent Night

<https://youtu.be/vyK48FEpQv8>

# Christmas Eve / Christmas Day

## December 24/25, 2020

“Open Me First!”

*Celebrating alone, with youth and/or adults*

# WONDER

*Set aside time alone, or together, online, or on a phone call, and offer a simple prayer. You may read the one here, or offer your own. Feel free to do each section in any order.*

### Prayer and Candle Lighting:

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This story is written by Rev. Steve Petty. You can watch him read it [HERE](#).  
(Link: [https://youtu.be/RCHOPG\\_I4qo](https://youtu.be/RCHOPG_I4qo))

I first ran across this story in 1968 when I was traveling with a work team in the Philippines. My future Father-in-Law gave me a small devotional book titled “Creative Brooding” by Robert Rains. One of the stories he quoted was from Moss Hart’s autobiography “Act One.” When Moss Hart, the famous Broadway playwright, was ten years old his family was extremely poor. Since his father was unable to find a job, the family supported itself by renting rooms in their old house in a dingy neighborhood in New York City. He writes:

“Obviously, Christmas was out of the question. We were barely staying alive. On Christmas Eve my father was very silent during the evening meal. Then he surprised and startled me by suddenly turning to me and saying, “Let’s take a walk.” He had never suggested such a thing before, and moreover it was a very cold winters night. I was even more surprised when he said as we left the house, “Let’s go down to 149th and Westchester Avenue.”

My heart leapt within me. That was the section where all the big stores were, where at Christmas time open pushcarts full of toys stood packed end to end for blocks at a stretch. I joyously concluded that this walk could mean only one thing: he was going to buy me a Christmas present.

On the walk down I was beside myself with delight and an inner relief. It has been a bad year for me and I wanted a Christmas present terribly—not a present merely, but a symbol, a token of some sort. I needed some sign from my father or mother that they knew what I was going through and that they cared. I am sure that they were giving me such mute signs as they could, but I did not see them. The idea that my father had managed a Christmas present for me in spite of everything filled me with a sudden peace and lightness of heart that I had not known in months.

We hurried on, our heads bent against the wind, to the cluster of lights ahead that was 149th Street and Westchester Avenue, and those lights seemed to me the brightest light I had ever seen. Tugging at my father’s coat, I started down the line of pushcarts. There were all kinds of things that I wanted, but I would merely pause before a pushcart and say, with as much control as I could muster, “Look at that chemistry set!” or “There’s a stamp album’ or “Look at that printing press!” Each time my father would pause and ask the pushcart man the price, then without a word we would move on to the next cart.

Once or twice he would pick up a toy of some kind and look at it and then at me, as if to suggest that this might be something that I would like, but I was ten years old and good bit beyond just a toy; my heart was set on a printing press.

Soon I saw that we were nearing the end of the line. Only two or three carts remained. I heard my father jingle some coins in his pocket.

All at once I knew it all. He'd gotten together about 75 cents to get me a present, and he hadn't dared say so in case there was nothing to be had for so small a sum. As I looked at him I saw a look of despair and disappointment in his eyes that brought me closer to him than I had ever been in my life. I wanted to throw my arms around him and say "It doesn't matter. I understand. This is better than a chemistry set or a printing press. I love you." But instead we stood shivering beside each other for a moment, then turned away from the last two pushcarts and started silently back home.

I don't know why the words remained choked up inside me. I didn't even take his hand nor did he take mine. We were not on that basis. Nor did I ever tell him how close I felt to him that night, that for a little while the concrete wall between father and son had crumbled away and I knew that we were two lonely people struggling to reach each other."

Whenever I read this story it brings tears to my eyes. It did then, in the summer heat on Luzon, and it still does today in 2020, more than 50 years later. It touches me deeply for two reasons. First, as a child I can relate to the distance that can exist between a son and a father. I see my own father's face leading me down a row of Christmas Carts. Second, as a father, I understand the difficulties of loving children who are more invested in the sparkly gifts in bright wrapping, than in the relationship and love I feel so deeply for them.

The greatest gift of Christmas is God's gift to us of Jesus Christ. It is the purest gift of love. Yet so often on Christmas we get too wrapped up in the glitz and glamour of grander and more glorious gifts in boxes, we forget to receive the best gift of Christmas. God's Love, profound, perfect, passionate love for each of us.

I encourage you to open God's gift first. Remind yourself, and everyone around you, about this precious gift. Then spend a few moments sharing that gift. Embrace the people around you and share, without reservation, how much you love them. Physical gifts cannot begin to express the depth of our love for one another.

Then when the best gift has been opened and shared around. Move on to the tree and fully enjoy your own gift giving and receiving.

#### **Closing Prayer**

Forgive us, O Lord, for getting so wrapped up in gift giving that we forget to receive the love that you send us in Jesus Christ. Remind us, every day, O Lord, to love one another as Jesus loves us. Fill us with the love of Jesus, so that we might fill the world with his love. Amen.