

Adoring Him This Year

by Danielle Hoglund, Crowfoot Family Member

“Christmas won’t be Christmas without any presents...” That’s the famous first line of a classic book, and here 150 years later, I’m hearing echoes of it all around me. A co-worker lamented that Thanksgiving didn’t feel like Thanksgiving and she’s sure that Christmas won’t feel like Christmas. An online friend said that Christmas just won’t feel right with all her usual get-togethers canceled due to pandemic cautions and governor’s orders. She’s scrambling to find ways to make her kids’ Christmas feel special, feel normal. Even one very jaded and cynical acquaintance, while grinning about having to hear Christmas music all month long, again, admitted to feeling deeply sad “for the kids.” There is a palpable sense of loss, coupled with creative attempts to compensate.

How about you? How would you finish Jo’s sentence at the beginning of *Little Women*? “Christmas won’t be Christmas without...” Without all the family gathered? Without a parade and a tree-lighting ceremony? Without a party where you play a goofy game with white elephant gifts? Without ribbons, without bags, without packages, boxes or bags? Without some loved one’s special Christmas dish? Without a concert or carol event that gives you a shivering sense of awe and connects this moment of worship to all your previous Christmas worship, or even gives you a sense of connectedness to all the centuries of Christmas worshippers who have gone before you? The things you can count on to make you feel Christmas. Maybe you can do without most of the going and doing and settle into a comfortable season of hygge, happy with your fuzzy sweater and hot drink and a book or movie. But what if? What if that were gone, too. What if all the external, cultural, ritual, traditional, all of the material things that sing “Christmas” to us were lost? What if everything were reduced to the very simplest essence of worship? Would we say, “I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation”? (Ps. 13:5) Would He capture our full attention? Would we Come and Adore Him? It is a question worth pondering, a question we might not bother to ask of ourselves without living with the small losses of this particular moment. Here’s our opportunity to search ourselves and respond to our Savior with affection and adoration. Let’s not turn away from this question too quickly. Let’s not waste this opportunity to turn loss into worship. Let’s not waste a moment to experience a connection with our brothers and sisters across the globe and the years who have worshipped through far greater adversity.

Of course, the observance and celebration of Nativity should not be an entirely immaterial, spiritual, mysterious sort of thing. Worship is an act of the mind and soul and body together. The Nativity itself is a miraculous joining of spiritual reality and our material world. The Word became flesh, “fullness of God in helpless babe.” Rachel Jankovic wrote a lovely 2011 article for young moms titled “Of Kids and Christmas” that explores this messy triumph, saying, “...the power of Christmas is when spiritual and material meet. And it always has been. That is the joy of the season, that is the good news, that is the laughter and the paradox and the earth-shaking magic of Christmas.” God’s own instructions for worship often showcase the connection of physical and spiritual response. Lift your hands. Bow. Shout. Eat. His list of suggested menu items in Deut. 14 for a worship feast is enough, someone once said, “to make an old Baptist blush.” The material celebrations surrounding Christmas are also an opportunity to worship, to adore Him. We are meant to connect in this way, to make merry, to observe Christmas both in our hearts and with all the frills, to “feel the feels.” So here we are, in this balancing act of Christmas 2020. It is appropriate to rethink what we need in order to feel Christmas. Let’s lean into the opportunity, find that Jesus is there, and adore Him. It is appropriate to grieve loss. Let’s lean into the grief and find Jesus there, and adore Him. It is perfectly right to make merry and celebrate in the best way we can. Let’s lean into merry-making and find that Jesus is there also. O Come, Let us Adore Him.

