

A Sermon for Advent 3, Year A

by Ellen Weaver

Youth Sunday Service

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Christmas is coming, 13 days to be exact. Believe me, I'm counting; something's got to get you through finals week. Christmas is great; to a kid it just seems like a perfect season with the crisp winter air, and all the evergreen Christmas trees and the peppermints and everything just comes together wonderfully. And even though it can be stressful at times, it's just a happy season.

In Sunday school, we talked a lot about what Christmas means to us. Of course it means family, friends, faith, love, peace, goodwill towards men, joy, happiness, and we also came up with traditions. We all have our special and unique family traditions. We talked about many of our traditions last week. We talked about reminiscing about Christmas ornaments we've received over our lifetimes. About driving around looking at all the festively lit houses and streets. About all the cookies and gingerbread houses. You can't help but feel happy thinking about all those great times spent with each other over hot cocoa and Christmas carols.

We also talked about what gets us in the Christmas spirit. I mean, it can't just be Christmas, you have to feel like it's Christmas, right? For some of us it's Thanksgiving night when the plaza lights come on. For others it's the constant Christmas music and the smell of warm sugar cookies baking in the oven. And for me, well it's not Christmas until I watch *A Christmas Story* and see that Official Red Ryder Carbine-Action Two-Hundred-Shot Range Model Air Rifle.

And even though, these are all rather material, could you imagine Christmas without them? I couldn't, I mean, I'd get through it, but it just wouldn't feel right. And yet, so many people don't get all the presents, and they don't even have houses to put lights on. We talk about how commercialized Christmas is, but it just helps me feel so grateful for all I've got. Some people even talk about turning Christmas into St. Nicholas Day and celebrating Jesus' birth in the spring, which is the closer approximation to his birth.

I'm not sure how I feel about all this, but I know the older we get, the more complicated everything becomes. So, I've decided to sum up Christmas while everything is still rather simple. To me Christmas is about love, peace, and joy, and if it takes Christmas music and cookies to feel love, peace, and joy, than that's just dandy. But also, I'm trying to add another emotion to this: Thankfulness. It almost seems like thankfulness is so out of season after thanksgiving, were done with turkeys, on to holly and mistletoe, right?

I think we focus a lot on the stress and all the presents and everything has to be perfect. However, I've always been one of those people who live by the philosophy of "Just chill, man. It'll all work out". I'm not much of a perfectionist, as you can see, so I always look at things a little different. Sure, we can make Christmas as stressful as we want, but we should always keep in mind that sometimes we just have to stop and remember what this seasons about. And you've probably heard it a thousand times, but I really think Jesus would have wanted us to feel peaceful and joyful. It seems hard at times, but you just can't get so wrapped up in all your Christmas affairs.

Its one of the few seasons that you need to stay grounded, but it's one of the hardest seasons to do that.

So I guess to finish it up, I'd like everyone to go home and just have a nice time this holiday season. Just relax and chill out when everything becomes to stressful. It doesn't have to be all about having to buy presents and making everything perfect, it should be a happy experience getting together and getting to do all those things. And maybe even helping other families out; other families that aren't able to buy a ton of presents and bake dozens of cookies.

And when it's all over, and all the gifts are put away and everyone's gone home, you breathe a sigh of relief, but it's those wonderful moments that we will always cherish and look forward to next year.