

Sermon and order of service A Quiet Christmas  
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Delivered December 24, 2017 First Unitarian Universalist Society of Middleboro

**Homily**            *A Quiet Christmas*

To be honest, even though it's morning,  
we are a little tired, a little overwhelmed.  
We are older and have seen many Christmases.  
We are younger and have many more ahead of us.  
In the rare and quiet moments of these days, our hearts are sometimes full.  
In this moment, let your memories come.

What I remember most from holidays in my dim past is great ambivalence. I know where it came from. It came from all the unspoken worries that floated around. In our season of rampant materialism, the holidays were supposed to be great equalizers. We would all be loved the same. High stakes, let me tell you. So worry warred with anticipation. Would we like our presents. Would they like our presents. Were each of us treated exactly the same as the others. Who was going to be grumpy or guilty or happy or sleepy through the whole morning after being up all night because some assembly was required? Who was going to get exactly what they wanted? Who was going to get stuck cleaning up?

Would there be a moment of wonder? A pause to hear the shake of harness bells? There would be none unless I made it. I remember putting the Mormon Tabernacle Choir Christmas album on the turntable, and laying down under the tree and looking up through the decorations all lit up and sparkling. And there would just be the music and the glow looming overhead and maybe a sister to join me.

If you were to give yourself one gift today, one gift precious to you, what would it be? Empty yourself of all expectations of *others*, of what you think others want from you. Empty yourself of all pain, all desire for perfection. One gift; a thing, an ability, a state of being, a state of mind, a space, a promise, a person – what would it be? One gift to carry you into tomorrow.

There is one gift I would want for you, each and every one of you, one gift wrapped carefully and left under the branches of your tree. If you held it to your ear, you might hear faint sounds of a world glad with winter singing. If there was one gift I would hope for, it would be the sure and certain knowledge that you will be alright. Come what may, mine to you, my wish for you is that you will be alright. I know, I know it would be hard to open that box. You might not be able to do it in the moment. You might need help from others. You might need help from yourself; to lay a burden aside and free your hands, your mind, your spirit. So imagine the box is a gift, waiting there, under the branches of your tree, waiting for love and unexpected grace. I leave you with a poem this morning...

FAITH

I want to write about faith,  
    about the way the moon rises  
        over cold snow, night after night,  
faithful even as it fades from fullness,  
    slowly becoming that last curving and impossible  
        sliver of light before the final darkness.

But I have no faith myself  
    I refuse it even the smallest entry.  
Let this then, my small poem,  
    like a new moon, slender and barely open,  
        be the first prayer that opens me to faith.

-- David Whyte