

December 2025 Coming, ready or not

I wonder how early you start 'getting ready for Christmas'? I know people who prepare all year by buying gifts that X would like throughout the year, when they see them. And sometimes I wish I was that well organised. And many shops seem to start encouraging us to shop for Christmas when it still feels to me like summer. But for me the beginning of December is usually about the time when I realise just how quickly Christmas is approaching, and how little I have done.

Amidst all my inevitable busyness at this time of year, I always make time during Advent to reflect on what we are actually celebrating at Christmas. One of the names Christians use for Jesus is 'Emmanuel', which means 'God with us.' As part of my preparation each year for Christmas, I reflect on the awesome miracle that God loves the world – loves you and me and all that he has made - so much that he chose to be born as one of us – as 'God with us.' That miracle never ceases to amaze me, and many of my most treasured memories connected with Christmas, are about ways in which people bless one another, reflecting something of God's love.

Before moving back to Derbyshire, I had years when I was able to volunteer as a Street Pastor in Leicester City Centre. One of my greatest blessings in the approach to Christmas was undoubtedly the time we were able to spend with the homeless of Leicester. Each year they would teach me more about the true spirit of Christmas. I remember numerous occasions sitting in doorways with homeless people while they spoke of the pain of being cold and hungry, and the far greater pain of being completely ignored by busy shoppers rushing about buying things they did not need. And of course, I remembered at these times that Jesus was born particularly to show God's love for the poor and neglected.

I remember too, the incredible generosity the homeless so often showed towards others. On one particularly cold night, when the temperature had fallen to about -12C, we gave a sleeping bag to a young girl shivering in a shop doorway. Her face lit up with pure joy. 'You're so wonderful,' she told us, 'Now I can give my blanket to X who doesn't have one.'

So my prayer for us all this month, is that we can all be more touched by the spirit of God, that shone so clearly through that girl who could fit all her possessions into a carrier bag and yet still had enough to give to others. And I pray that we may also share something of the joy that radiated from her.

Yours in Christ,
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