

28 November 2021

Dear Friends of Elmwood,

Yesterday, I heard the unmistakable sound of windshield wipers scraping across a thin layer of ice. Advent is here.

I have neither time nor energy to write you properly today. I'm knackered. I'm sorry about that. Instead, I'm offering you a poem by Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury and the best theologian alive in the English-speaking world today, in my estimation.

(If you've lost patience with my penchant for poetry and are also awfully averse to abysmal alliteration, jump to the bottom for some notes of news.)

### **A Cosmic Christ**

Rowan Williams is prolific, intelligent, and devout in all the right ways. If your faith puzzles you and you wonder what it would be like to pray and live your faith more, well, more 'faithfully', with a bit more wisdom, welcome to the club. It's called 'the Church'. But you knew that.

You could do worse than turn to one of Rowan Williams' popular works. (His scholarly work is seriously brilliant but also seriously demanding.)

One of these little books might be worth stuffing in the stocking of your household agnostic this Christmas. Maybe that's you!

*Christ on Trial: How the Gospel Unsettles our Judgment* (2000)

*Tokens of Trust: An Invitation to Christian Belief* (2007)

*Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer* (2014)

*Meeting God in Mark* (2014)

*Meeting God in Paul* (2015)

*Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Faith* (2016)

*God With Us: The Meaning of the Cross and Resurrection* (2017)

*Holy Living: The Christian Tradition for Today* (2017)

*Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons* (2018)

Now, here's the poem I promised. Much of its imagery comes from a rural world of wintry ache and longing. Rowan Williams invites us to understand that the Advent of Jesus Christ is not something that happens just once in a stable in

Bethlehem, nor in the private chambers of our hearts, nor at the End of Time. It happens in every aspect of the living world that is nature: the fall of a leaf, winter's frost, darkness descending, and a child's cry in the night.

Each stanza, in my mind, takes us through the four weeks of Advent until we reach the final doorway at the end of the Advent Calendar. We open it and glimpse, at last, the mystery we've been led to all along.

### **Advent Calendar**

He will come like last leaf's fall.  
 One night when the November wind  
 has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth  
 wakes choking on the mould,  
 the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.  
 One morning when the shrinking earth  
 opens on mist, to find itself  
 arrested in the net  
 of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.  
 One evening when the bursting red  
 December sun draws up the sheet  
 and penny-masks its eye to yield  
 the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,  
 will come like crying in the night,  
 like blood, like breaking,  
 as the earth writhes to toss him free.  
 He will come like child.

### **News Notes, Naturally**

There will be a brief Congregational Meeting after the worship service. It will be our chance to examine, review, and adopt a budget for 2022. Fun, eh?

Also, the London Branch of the Royal Canadian College of Organists (RCCO) holds its annual Service of Lessons and Carols this Sunday night (November 28). We're so fortunate to have this Organisation of Organists in our community.

The Service has had to be pared down, for the second year in a row, because of the *damned pandemic*. I'm really getting sick of having to give way to pandemic at times like this. It means, of course, that the Public (we) can't attend in person and sing hymns and carols together the way we used to do. Sing them out loud in your living room instead, OK?

The Brass Band of The Salvation Army (they're *very* good) will be there, and other voices you may recognise too.

The 'Livestream' starts at 7:30 p.m. You can watch it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNDxAK9aI04&authuser=0>

Yours in the faith,  
Andrew

*Rowan Williams*

