

Anticipation!

What's the earliest you've woken up Christmas Day to go downstairs and unwrap presents? Did you have to wrap them again so that your parents wouldn't find out? I've always been a really skilled sleeper, so I've never been up earlier than 7am (that I remember!), but I know the stories! Jesus tells us that there are things we can learn from the approach of children to the Kingdom of God and I wonder if this skill of excitement and waiting is something we should take seriously?

It'll start soon I suspect: the Advent calendars will come out and the countdown will begin, waiting and waiting for The Day. But it's not a passive wait, it's not a sit-down-and-sulk wait, it's a constant "When?", "Is it now?", "How much longer?", "Can I open just one today?" It's relentless! It might well test the patience of every loving parent, but it's great to see and be a part of. You just hope that the gift you've bought comes even close to the anticipated excitement of its unwrapping!

What do we wait for? I hope we still feel some of the childlike anticipation of receiving gifts to celebrate Jesus' birth. The expectation is as important as the celebration and both are vital elements of our worship life that should be maintained.

Luke chapter 21, verses 27-28 say, "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." That image of straightening up really speaks to me. Think of all the things that have people bowed low at the moment, those things that are really dragging people down. Straighten up! Your redemption is near! Christ's return and our redemption will see the end of being bowed low, so that we can lift our heads! Nothing will drag us down now!

That will be the final gift to outweigh all gifts, ever. What we anticipate during Advent and celebrate at Christmas is the great beginning of the mighty expectation of the final redemption.

Lift up your heads, the Kingdom is near!

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