

Christmas Eve Meditation 2021  
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A grandmother was getting ready to head back to her house on Christmas Eve when her little granddaughter Olivia looked at her with concern.

“Grandma, make sure to be really careful on your way home,” she said, “Santa is delivering presents.”

Her grandmother smiled at her. “I don't think I have to worry about Santa,” she said.

Olivia looked at her incredulously.  
“Haven't you heard? He's already run one grandmother over!”

Oh if that was all we had to worry about!

Jesus came into the world to bring us peace, wholeness, healing and salvation. And we need all of these things. We are living in turbulent times, and the Omicron variant was the last thing we needed right now. Everywhere I look, everyone I speak to, people are stressed and uncertain. We want to know what is going to happen and we want to know that we will be okay, but we don't know and nothing is guaranteed. Masks, mandates and arguments. We're weary of it. Peace is hard to find. The unity we all felt at the beginning of this pandemic has disappeared. And all of the world's other crisis and our personal struggles continue right along without regard to whether or not we feel up to it. We humans can only live one day at a time, and we cannot control the world around us. Living with constant noise and anxiety will burn us out. Tonight, let us take a moment to be still and sit in the presence of God, to be restored and renewed.

The good news we celebrate at Christmas is that God really does know what it's like to be us, and God really does care. Jesus is God incarnate. God came as a baby. God experienced total weakness and vulnerability. God grew up in a two-room peasant home with absolutely no privacy. God was sick and experienced grief. God knows first-hand what it is to be tempted to do wrong. God took on human nature so God could heal us from the inside out and restore us. That's what the Christmas story is really all about.

Jesus was born into a dangerous world too. His life was in danger the moment he entered this world. And practical steps were taken by his parents and others to protect him. Deadly disease was rife in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and political conflict very real. Jesus knows what we face. The 1<sup>st</sup> century may not have had social media and cable news, but human nature has not changed. Jesus had enemies. He experienced conflict. But he told us not to be overcome by fear and anxiety, but instead to bring everything to God in prayer.

God loves us. God loves us so much that God sent Jesus into the world. We can easily be overcome by an avalanche of anxiety. Although it requires a deliberate decision on our part, we can also choose something different. We can

place our lives in God's hands. Logically we know there are many dangers in the world. And God does not want us to abandon common sense. Jesus was protected in every practical way as a baby. Trusting God does not mean passivity. Get vaccinated. Stay away from dangerous places and dangerous people. Don't go near a mob of any kind, even one that calls itself a concert. Travel in groups. Obey the speed limits. Make sure the wiring in your house is legal and safe. Do all these things, but know too that there is a randomness to the world that we cannot protect against. The only thing we can do is exchange our anxiety for God's power and grace.

The light has shone in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. This year as we light candles and sing together the words of Silent Night, I invite you to give God what burdens you, and invite the gentle powerful presence of God's Spirit in. Amen.