

Advent 3A - December 2019

A Place of Dreams

There was once a woman who was disappointed, who was disillusioned, who was depressed. She wanted a good world, a peaceful world, and she wanted to be a good person. But the newspaper and television showed her how far we were from such a reality. So she decided to go shopping. She went to the mall and wandered into a new store - where the person behind the counter looked strangely like Jesus. Gathering up her courage she went up to the counter and asked, "Are you Jesus?" "Well, yes, I am," the man answered. "Do you work here?" "Actually," Jesus responded, "I own the store. You are free to wander up and down the aisles, see what it is I sell, and then make a list of what you want. When you are finished, come back here, and we'll see what we can do for you."

So, the woman did just that. And what she saw thrilled her. There was peace on earth, no more war, no hunger or poverty, peace in families, no more drugs, harmony, clean air. She wrote furiously and finally approached the counter, handing a long list to Jesus. He skimmed the paper, and then smiling at her said, "No problem."

Reaching under the counter, he grabbed some packets and laid them out on the counter. Confused, she asked, "What are these?" Jesus replied: "These are seed packets. You see, this is a catalogue store." Surprised the woman blurted out, "You mean I don't get the finished product?" "No," Jesus gently responded. "This is a place of dreams.

You come and see what it looks like, and I give you the seeds. Then you plant the seeds. You go home and nurture them and help them to grow and someone else reaps the benefits." "Oh," she said, deeply disappointed in Jesus. Then she turned around and left the store without buying anything. (Adapted by Susan R. Andrews, as told in *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life* by F. and M. Brussat, editors (New York: Scribner, 1996), p. 359)

In the mid-twentieth century, when credit cards were first being marketed to the masses, the companies explained the concept to their potential customers by advertising they would take the waiting out of wanting.

Instant gratification was just a little square of plastic away. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century waiting for anything has become a completely foreign concept. FedEx, e-mails, instant-messaging, cell phones, pagers, PayPal, all bring us information and truckloads of stuff as soon as we demand it. Our kids don't know what it means to wait for anything - for the latest video game or a phone of their own. They can download tunes and burn their own CDs for instant, endless music. Young and old can all get instant credit and instant gratification. Waiting - for love, waiting for knowledge, waiting for wisdom, has little validity in our get-it-now-or-forget-it culture. (by Leonard Sweet)

Are You the One?

"Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" I once met a rabbi who was deeply spiritual, and if our paths hadn't crossed so briefly, I would have asked him to be my spiritual director. He said to me one day: "Look around you. Does this look like a world in which Messiah has come? That's my problem with Christianity." And I looked around, and I had to admit that the world didn't look all that redeemed.

Reb Zalman-for that was his name-had a lot of experience of an unredeemed-looking world. When he was a teenager, he and his family fled from Austria to escape from Hitler. They worked their way across Europe, gradually selling or bartering everything they had. The last night they had to cross from Belgium into Holland, to get to the port at Rotterdam. They had to go through a dark wood, keeping the babies quiet so the Nazi guards wouldn't hear them. But the man who had promised to guide them through the woods didn't want to take them. The last little bit of money they had wasn't enough for him to risk his neck. But this man had a mother, and his mother took him by the ear and pointed to a picture on the wall of their kitchen-a picture of Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, fleeing into Egypt to escape from Herod. "Look at them and tell me you won't take them!" she said. And he took them.

So that family, and their baby, escaped, though it took them much longer than they had thought it would. And there was at least one point at which Jesus made a difference in the story. But was that enough to balance all the

rest, enough so that we could say this looks like a redeemed world? (by Linda M. Maloney)