



Away in a Manger, No Crib for his Bed

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Sweet Baby Jesus is in a caravan of travelers, heading north. He is tiny, carried by his tender mother, fleeing from a country with no space left for growing. Or Jesus is walking barefoot as a toddler, wearing through shoes en route and feet burning in deserts. Jesus is hungry, terrified and crying. His parents do what they can, pushed by the promise of hope, the allusive caring that perhaps, maybe... maybe... pulled by the stories that come and the meager help already offered from family in the north, and the jobs that may have already been promised.

Over his head, the many forces of government speak of census and how many people can be where and whose job it is to bring them there. They note that there is no room at the inn or the town or the city or the county or the country or the world for their kind of refugee-seeking. They note that if they stay, the tiny one will be murdered. They note all this in the guise of security and in the guise of maintaining allusions of power for the wealthy.

This, this; is Christ the child who will grow to call the world into justice. This, this; is Christ the child who will grow up to invite the welcome of stranger, the hospitality of many. This, this; is Christ the child who will grow to paint a vision of a world where no human is illegal, there is enough and more for all, and the righteous and just rule in alignment with the kingdom of God.

What cognitive dissonance. What willful obstinance. What mourning, disgust, and perpetuation of abuse and torture.

It's obscene that America, a nation that calls itself Christian, is actively and intentionally choosing the god of security over the divine liberator. It's obscene that here, in America, the infant Himself is caged and tear-gassed and looked at with suspicion as he approaches with nothing, seeking help. Seeking grace. Seeking family and a new home that is out of danger. It's obscene ... but not surprising to many that here, in America, a nation founded on values that many still turn to in times of uncertainty, is staying more closely attuned to the founding values of colonialism and theft of another's liberty.

My faith tells me that to dehumanize anyone is to scoff at the divine wonder of created beings. My faith tells me that my neighbor is the one seeking help. My faith tells me that to welcome the least of these is to welcome Christ among us. My country tells me the opposite. As we lean into the season of advent, it is my prayer that the love of the Liberator will turn hardened hearts of political obscenities toward justice and welcome. It is my prayer that the love of the Liberator will wake the sleeping populous into action. It is my prayer that the love of the Liberator will be with the people seeking a new homeland, carrying with them infants resembling the baby Christ.

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