

November 29, 2017

In the Interim . . .

Not Just December 25

My husband's mother, Louise, loved Christmas. She started preparing for it in the summer, and she started celebrating it as soon as fall began. It has been seventeen years now since "Memaw" died at age 78, yet she is still missed tremendously by her family, especially this time of year.

It has been thirty-three years since Bill's sister Jeslyn buried her daughter Katherine. Katherine was only six months old when she died, yet Jeslyn and her family still think of her and miss her, particularly at Christmastime.

One Christmas, seeking to honor her mother's example of giving, Jeslyn took two names of individuals with special needs from the Angel Tree at her church. The two for whom she was to purchase gifts were a child and a senior adult. When Jeslyn looked at the paper angels from the tree, she was amazed to see that the child was a little girl named Katherine, and the senior adult was a seventy-eight-year-old woman named Louise.

Alan D. Wofelt, a grief counselor, suggests, "Keep each holiday as a reminder of all the things you shared with the person who has died. And remember: Grief is both a painful necessity and a privilege, for it comes as a result of having loved."

If you are grieving this season, if for some reason you do not feel like celebrating, here is a challenge to you: When you hear the carol "Joy to the World," cling to that third verse: "He comes to make his blessings flow . . . far as the curse is found." Three times it is repeated: "far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found."

This season, may God come to you and make blessings flow through moments, through music, through people, through memories, through hopes. And in marking the privilege of having loved and been loved, may you come to understand a Christmas that is not limited to just 24 hours on the 25th of December.

Wanda Neely

Wanda