

Devotional for Advent Week 1

From “Bless the Advent We Actually Have” by Kate Bowler & the Everything Happens Project.
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God With Us



Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

—PSALM 139:7-10 (NIV)

I used to think that life was a series of choices. The college I picked. The person I chose to marry. The number of kids I wanted. The job I worked so hard to get. *Check. Check. Check.* I curated my own life until, one day, I couldn't. Until one day, tumors spread across my colon without my consent. Perhaps a death or disease or diagnosis or tragedy undid your well-made plans and took away your ability to choose the life you want, too. So often life happens *to* us. Without asking our permission (how dare it!).

When we discover we are living in the in-between of what is possible and what is not possible, we have recognized our limited agency. That small square footage where we can no longer assume EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE. Instead, we must ask, *What is possible today?* I find that question far easier to wonder when I recognize there is no choice that escapes the promised presence of God.

During Advent, we are reminded that hope is found in an unexpected place—a tiny infant who came to face real life with us, to teach us how to live and how to hope, and, ultimately, to die for us. And he shall be called Immanuel, which means God With Us (Matthew 1:23). God with us on the beautiful days and the impossible ones. God with us as we celebrate and as we mourn. God with us as we make infinite choices or have very little choice at all. God with us when we have no other choice but to keep going. There is no place we can go that God has not already been—from the manger to the banquet table to the tomb, God is with us.

REFLECT

1. How do you experience God's presence? Do you find God in nature? In a feeling of peace? In words of comfort or hope? In the presence of a friend?
2. Do you find it easier to recognize the presence of God on good days or hard ones? Why do you think that is?

BLESSING

Blessed are you in the tender place of awe and dread,
wondering how to be whole
when dreams have disappeared and part of you with them.

From The Lives We Actually Have p 188

LISTEN

https://youtu.be/_VfO-lkXG-g?si=xdGEOdsBG-ZaOcLe

Kate Bowler chats with poet and artist, Jan Richardson, about planning her life in no more than 15 minute increments during the period of mourning after her husband's death. (4 min). Click link above.

Our imagination is the most remarkable thing to come to life after grieving.
Richardson

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Please join us in person or on the live stream on Sundays at 10:30 am.