

Advent waiting

Foreboding drenched in expectation

As I write, the United States is bombing Afghanistan and dropping food packets to that country's citizens. This war differs from others in that dichotomy of action. We support the war on terrorism, dusting off a sense of patriotism that resonates with us in this time of terror more than in our privileged lives of peace.

Rarely has my sense of morality led me to believe in solutions that called for the taking of human life. I wasn't alive when past situations of this magnitude occurred. My untested philosophy is battered by today's harsh realities.

War leaves me spiritually searching. I gravitate toward biblical passages that speak of the God of kindness and mercy more than passages that portray a God of fear and wrath. I believe we are all children of God. Yet the sheer evil of Sept. 11 fires my fragile philosophy to its breaking point. I'm moving toward acknowledging that evil must be rebuked but praying my previous beliefs still hold merit.

My 6-year-old son innately understands the nature of evil. After recently hearing the story of Snow White, Joshua said, "The queen couldn't be evil to Snow White anymore because the Prince had a gun and a sword."

I recall no gun and attribute the Prince's sword to window dressing. But I consider the premise so easily assumed by my son as just: Wielded by the righteous, weapons of war protect the innocent from evil. Evil must be rebuked.

On the other hand, Joshua's twin sister innately understands the nature of living faithfully. "What does God look like?" Brennan asked recently. Before I responded, she answered, "I think God looks like us when we're doing good stuff."

As we enter the season of Advent, it's frighteningly easy to corrupt this season of anticipation with foreboding thoughts of the future. But Advent asks us to consider the full scope of Christ's gifts to us—beginning, present and world without end. With Advent, we look at what Christ has already done for us, rebuking evil. We consider what Christ continues to do for us in our daily lives as we act on our faith and do "good stuff." And we rely on Christ's promise of his return in the future, with a peace that passes our understanding.

Even in these times, when war offers both bombs and food, the message of the Advent season offers the deep solace only God's grace gives. □



By: Nancy Dorman-Hickson

Dorman-Hickson, a member of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Birmingham, Ala., is an editor of Southern Living magazine.

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