

## The gift of Ordinary Time

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I have a sneaking suspicion this is what matters most.

Not the anticipation of Advent, the celebration of Christmas, the long journey of Lent, or the exuberance of Easter.

But the everyday of Ordinary Time.

Lately our kids have been grumbling about the Christmas decorations being packed away. *The house looks so plain, I hate it.*

And they're right. There is something melancholy about tucking away the trappings of such a happy season.

At first glance we see only absence. The gaping space where the tree stood. The empty mantel where the creche was displayed. The bare door frame where grinning faces of friends and family beamed down at us from Christmas cards.

But there is welcome relief in slipping back into the ordinary, too.

Rediscovering the beauty of what was already around us, hidden behind the holiday lights and ornaments. The walls and windows of our own world. The places and peace that we had already worked to cultivate.

I have noticed over the past few years a stirring within myself. Pulling away from the excitement of the Big Events and drawing towards the quiet everyday.

Part of this awakening came with motherhood, which taught that I am an introvert. A solitude-seeking soul who craves calm. Someone who needs to cultivate space for silence, even in the midst of this good work of raising a busy family.

But part of this shift came from stepping back from the whirl of our culture, its constant reaching for the Next Big Thing, its frantic need to fill the stores with the

next holiday's decorations the second that the latest over-hyped celebration ends.

I'm tired of being bombarded with Valentine's pinks and reds as soon as New Year's hats are whisked off the shelves.

I want to savor the spaces in between.

So at home, I'm growing grateful for bare windowsills and sparse shelves. For the glow from a single lit candle. For the quiet dark of winter nights.

And at church, I am remembering how much I love Ordinary Time, too.

I am whispering thanks for the wisdom of a tradition that knows our human need for time and space in between.

Jesus did most of his living and working in ordinary time. Thirty years before his ministry became public. We don't know the ordinary stories from those decades, but they must have been filled with the regular routines that fill our own lives: work, family, learning, growth, rest, repeat.

All of Jesus's ordinary time added up, slowly over seasons and years, to make him who he was. A son, a friend, a neighbor, a prophet, a healer, a teacher, a leader.

I wonder who we are each becoming in our ordinary time, too. As we wash the dishes, dry the laundry, do our work, love our families. How are we shaped by the routines and regular living of each day?

They are something to celebrate, these unassuming weeks of Ordinary Time. They shape us, slowly over seasons and years, into the people that God dreams we will become.

I suspect this ordinary time matters most.

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