

“The Letdown,”

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“We walk by faith and not by sight.” -2 Corinthians 5:7

How many of us would say that January is our favorite month of the year? January is the month we take down the lights to face the longest, darkest days of winter. January is the month the train stops, the tourists leave and the shops close, leaving the locals alone to face a quiet, empty town. January is the month we put our favorite foods aside to face the discipline of fasting and exercise, hoping for a new, improved body by summer.

For many of us, January is the month we feel a sense of letdown, because, to be honest, the holidays didn't live up to those romantic images of Christmas that we see on television and in magazines. Most of us went into the month of January tired from the stress of visiting difficult or sick relatives, weary from all the running around and preparing for the celebration, and bloated from the weight we gained eating too much. Some of us spent the holidays in hospitals or at home sick with the flu, alone, or grieving a loss.

I wonder how the shepherds, magi, and all the other people who saw the miracle of Jesus' birth felt after they went home to their daily routines? After all the hype from the prophets during Advent about the coming of the Prince of Peace and the ideal messianic age, all they remembered was a baby laying on the straw in a manger. Nothing seemed to change.

I wonder how disappointed most people in the Gospel stories were with Jesus. They were looking for a military hero who would lead a revolt against the Romans, yet nothing seemed to change. The disciples had to be brokenhearted after Jesus' death. Two disciples on their way to Emmaus that first Easter morning even said, “Our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But *we had hoped* that He was the One to redeem Israel.” (Luke 24: 20-21) Nothing seemed to change.

Then, as the risen Lord began appearing to the disciples, it became clear that the whole Christian life was going to depend on what could be seen with the eyes of faith alone. And when the early church began to walk on faith with the Spirit leading the way, things began to change as people were transformed to build a kingdom that was not of this world.

As the sun breaks through the dark clouds, I look forward to February. With the eyes of faith, I can see that the letdown of January has been a perfect opportunity to pray, asking the Lord who came and dwelt among us on Christmas morning to come and dwell among us today. So, come, Lord Jesus, and be a source of gladness when we're sad, a source of strength when we're weak, a source of hope when we feel let down and a source of the kind of change that this world needs to see.

