

It seems like every year children are the only ones really ready for Christmas. Each new December day brings colder weather and crazier kids. Confident that candy, presents, Santa, and the baby Jesus will all appear on schedule, they don't complain that Christmas came too soon or caught them unprepared.

For the rest of us, Christmas usually presents a different story. We don't have enough time to shop, to bake, to send cards, and to pray. Dinner will suffer from overcooked broccoli, spilled juice, and sugar highs. Gifts won't be the right size or color. Favorite decorations still languish boxed up in closets. People we invited can't come. Christmas fills adults with all the anxiety that seems to escape kids. Once we leave childhood behind we live in perpetual search for the perfect Christmas.

If an imperfect Christmas disappoints us, the perfect Christmas lies under our noses. Not until we're poor do we value possessions. Not until we're sick do we value health. Not until we're lonely do we value family. Not until we're hungry do we value food. Not until we're empty do we value God. Not until we're disappointed do we value Christmas. The point of Christmas is to lift people up. It's OK to start from feeling a little down.

The Son of God was born of a poor family from a non-descript village in an insignificant country. Mary entered no state-of-the-art hospital birthing room. She delivered her child in a barn, where nosy, no-good neighboring shepherds and noisy, nimble angels gave her no privacy. Poor, powerless, and homeless, she gave her child an extraordinary name: Jesus, a name which means "savior". Perhaps this child would rescue her from pain.

Children enjoy Christmas most because they have the least. They have few possessions, no job, no property; they can't shop, cook, or care for themselves. Christmas is less joyful when we tell ourselves we are powerful, wealthy, wise, and well. We're not. We're human, and we need this baby named "Savior". When we control Christmas we lose its joy. When we let Christmas direct us, Jesus will save, and joy will be ours.