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SLOWING  
*Time*

SEEING

*the* SACRED

OUTSIDE YOUR

KITCHEN

DOOR

ABINGDON PRESS  
NASHVILLE



COUNTING THE DAYS  
*On Leaning toward the Light*

I AM PRACTICING ADVENT. REALLY PRACTICING. Paying attention. Giving in to the season in ways that wash over me, seep into me, bring me back home to a place I may never have been.

Like a child this year, I have a just-opened sense of these days.

I am, for the very first time, not counting down. Not ticking off days and errands to run like a clock wound too tightly.

Instead, I am counting in a whole other way. I am counting, yes, but the thing that I'm doing is making count each one of the days.

I am counting the days in a way that takes time. That takes it and holds it. Savors it. Sucks out the marrow of each blessed hour.

I am this year embracing the darkness. I am kindling lights. I am practicing quiet. I am shutting out noise, and filling my house with the sounds of the season that call me.

I am practicing no. *No* is the word that I'm saying to much of the madness. No, I cannot go there. No, I cannot race from one end of town to the other. No, I will not.

## *Winter*

I am practicing yes.

Yes, I will wake up early. Will tiptoe alone, and in quiet, to down in the kitchen, and out to the place where the moon shines. Where the early bird hasn't yet risen. But I have. I am alone with the dark and the calm, and I am standing there watching the shadows, the lace of the moon. I am listening for words that fill up my heart. It's a prayer and it comes to me, fills my lungs, as I breathe in cold air, the air of December, December's most blessed breath.

Yes, I am redressing my house. I am tucking pinecones and berries of red, in places that not long ago were spilling with pumpkins and walnuts and acorns.

I am waking up to the notion that to usher the season into my house is to awaken the sacred. It is to shake off the dust of the days just before. To grope for the glimmer amid all the darkness.

December, more than most any month, can go one of two ways.

One trail is all tangled, all covered with bramble. You can get lost, what with all of the noise and all of the bright colored lights.

But December, if you choose, if you allow it, can be the trail through the woods that leads to the light, far off in the distance.

The darkness itself offers the gift. Each day, the darkness comes sooner, comes deeper, comes blacker than ink. It draws us in, into our homes, yes, but more so, into our souls.

It invites us: Light a light. Wrap a blanket. Sit by the fire. Stare into the flames, and onto the last dying embers. Consider the coming of Christmas.

*Slowing Time*

I am, in this month of preparing, in this month of a story told time and again, listening anew to the words. I am considering the story of the travelers, the Virgin with Child, the donkey, the man with the tools, the unlikely trio, knocking and knocking at door after door.

I am remembering how, long, long ago, I winced when I heard how no one had room. Open the door, I would shout deep inside. Make room. Make a room.

I didn't know then, I could change it. I could take hold of the story; make it be just as it should be.

But I do now. I know now.

I am taking hold of that story, the way that it's told this December. I am, in the dark and the quiet, making the room that I longed for. For the three in the story, yes, but even for me.

I am preparing a room at the inn. The inn, of course, is my heart.