

## What We are Getting for Christmas

Sunday, Dec 18, 2011 - Advent 4

---

Rev. Ken Gray

OK I admit it, I like getting presents (though admit I prefer cash)

- evolution of family traditions over time
- some folks like to know what they are getting ahead of time
- I push back and retain the right to “surprise” - will actively deceive to accomplish this
- I also resist paper wrapping, and the kids now follow me in this
- despite all claims to the contrary, I am a consumer
- What about you?

Leaving the secular in favour of the sacred, what do we expect from God this Christmas

- hints from PAUL TO ROME

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,

- in Mark, proclamation begins later
- to Matthew and Luke the Christmas stories
- intervention, history, reaction
- **Today: Wisdom, Community, Hope**

according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles,

- key word is mystery - now disclosed
- inter-cultural “revealing”
- **Today: encounter with a universal divine presence**

according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom

be the glory for ever! Amen.

- Roman context of inclusive Gospel
- acknowledgement of the wonder of God
- focus on the role “through” Christ
- eternal nature (against historical figure)
- Today: best expressed by Christmas by John Betjeman

The bells of waiting Advent ring,  
The Tortoise stove is lit again  
And lamp-oil light across the night  
Has caught the streaks of winter rain  
In many a stained-glass window sheen  
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

. . .

And is it true,  
This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,  
A Baby in an ox's stall ?  
The Maker of the stars and sea  
Become a Child on earth for me ?

And is it true ? For if it is,  
No loving fingers tying strings  
Around those tissue fripperies,  
The sweet and silly Christmas things,  
Bath salts and inexpensive scent  
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,  
No carolling in frosty air,  
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells  
Can with this single Truth compare -  
That God was man in Palestine  
And lives today in Bread and Wine.