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My favorite time of year is the span from Halloween to the New Year that includes that wonderful day of rest and feasting we call Thanksgiving, and of course Christmas Day itself. Colder weather and shorter, darker days mean more time in front of the fireplace snuggled up with a book and a cup of tea. Snow storms that shut down the city and bring the gift of an unexpected sabbath. Tromping around in snow, sledding or shoveling, wet and rosy-nosed then coming inside to the warmth of hearth and smell of hearty slow-cooked feast. Hunters bringing fresh game to the table and bakers making tins of cookies. I like the coziness, the smells, the snow covered land. And also the anticipation of Christmas itself. Putting up the tree, listening to carols, Christmas parties filled with good food and cheerful drink, receiving cards with updates from friends far away. Searching for just the right gifts. Welcoming our new born savior with candles and Silent Night on Christmas Eve worship. Christmas day's feast. Then that guilt-free lazy week after Christmas eating leftovers, watching movies, and my favorite part, pouring a cup of tea, wrapping up in a blanket, and reading a new book by the fireplace. It is a restful and quiet time of year, even with all the busy-ness.

But it is not so for everyone. Some of our family serve overseas in the military, Peace Corps, or as missionaries. Some are living through their first Christmas without a spouse or child. Some are alone. Some are in jail. Some will have no gifts or Christmas feast because of poverty. Some have no home in which to put up a tree. Romanticizing the season is so easy, we can forget the holiday anticipation for some is sadness or emptiness. Please remember them this season. Donate money to one of our food pantries or make a gift of warm clothing or toys. Invite a lonely neighbor to a feast. Volunteer at the Community Table. Call or visit someone who is shut in (especially easy if you are with a church). As we celebrate the birth of our savior, remember also the words he spoke years later: "Whatever you have done for the least of these, you have done for me." May we find ways to bring the joy of Christ's birth to our whole community.