



Your (Unofficial) Guide to Advent

Daring to Be Just

The lure of nostalgia can often stop us from critically reflecting on our Advent traditions. I have fond memories of singing “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”, dressing up children in tea towels and bathrobes for pageants, and reciting passages around darkness by the glow of candles. I can appreciate the beauty in these memories while also identifying and acknowledging the harm that these worship traditions have caused. As Maya Angelou said: “Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.” I know better, so I will do better. Here are some “isms” that I have learnt about and am working on during Advent:

- **Supersessionism** names Christianity as superior to any religious belief that came before it. How do we faithfully testify to who Christ is for us, without disrespecting and demeaning other faith traditions? Avoid any words or practices in worship that imply that Jesus’ coming supersedes or replaces God’s covenant with other Abrahamic traditions and faiths. In Advent this often looks like naming a Jewish promise and showing it fulfilled and perfected in Christ for all people.
- **Exoticism** is wearing cultural clothing that does not belong to you or that you do not have a close relationship to; it’s a form of cultural appropriation. Because of the universal appeal of the people in the Christmas story, it can be easy to forget that Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus are all historical people within a culture and a historical context. How we represent that culture in our re-enactments of the story says something. What do you hope to say?
- **Shadism** is the idea that good equals *light, fair, and pure*, and evil equals *dark, ugly, and dirty*. This ideology has been used for centuries to support racist beliefs and traditions. How do your worship words support or work against shadism?

