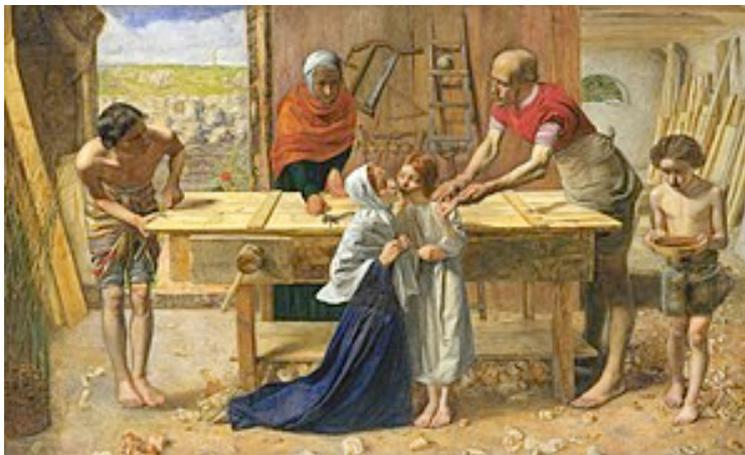


All pictures used are from *The Art of Advent* by Jane Williams. All poems are from *haphazard by starlight* by Janet Morley. Feel free to use these Advent reflections for house groups, for your own personal devotions, or not at all!

*Christ in the House of his Parents* by Everett Millais, 1849-50



This painting caused an outcry when it first appeared because of the ordinariness of what was portrayed – a family at work in a carpenter's workshop. While portraying real people with ordinary human emotions, it is full of metaphor and foretelling. The cut on the hand of the child Jesus, foreshadows the nails of the cross; the boy on the right, his cousin John, carries a bowl of water to wash the wound, foreshadowing his baptizing of Jesus. We, Jesus' followers are represented by the sheep looking in at the door. This painting was chosen to represent Joseph in the Advent art collection. Joseph was willing to be and do just what God needed him to. Joseph is often side-lined in the Christmas story, but without his willingness to think outside the box and provide safety for Mary and the baby, there would have been no future life of Christ.

The following poem talks about a different painting, but expresses how 'the Old Masters' understood suffering and humanity and ordinariness just as *Christ in the House of his Parents* does.

*Musée des Beaux Arts* by W. H. Auden

About suffering they were never wrong,  
The Old Masters: how well they understood  
Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;  
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
They never forgot  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.  
In Breughel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away  
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.