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Grits and God

We recently came across an amusing anecdote by Richard Wing who writes about his northern friend who was served a meal in a good old southern restaurant and was surprised to find a glob of unidentifiable white food on the plate. He asked the waitress what the glob was and she told him it was grits. When he protested that he had not ordered grits, she replied that "You don't order grits. They just come." Wing goes on to observe that Christmas is like that. You don't order God's coming. God just comes in God's own way and time and place.

It's an observation that should perhaps awe us and humble us. Though we strive to master all else about our lives, this is not under our control. We cannot orchestrate for God to come to us, to answer to us, to be accountable, or governable, or even predictable for us. God will be what God will be.

Maybe acknowledging that truth in this season can also help us relinquish our desire to control and master the celebration of God's coming. If our cooking is less than stellar this Christmas, will that inhibit God's coming? If our children's behavior is not what we hoped for, will that prevent God's coming? If our relatives disappoint us, if our finances are strained, if our gift purchases feel inadequate, if our health is compromised, if our dreams have failed to materialize, will any of these stop God from appearing? No, God just comes.

As we said, that ought to humble us and awe us. And even more, that ought to be a great comfort to us. We who live in a complex, demanding world can look forward to this single, incredible experience for which we have no responsibility, no influence, no way to earn, no way to altar, no way to derail. God will come to us when and how God deems appropriate. God does not fail at this appearing. God simply chooses times and ways and places we would not have anticipated.

We hope that this Christmas you will be able to take a deep breath, relinquish control for a moment, and pause to observe how God comes. We hope you find God lurking in words of apology, bubbling up in laughter of children, peeking out through the smiles of friends, wrapped up in simple gifts given in appreciation and offered in love. Perhaps you'll be surprised this season. Even without angel choruses and prophets' fiery announcements, God comes to us. God just comes – like grits in a good southern restaurant. When we frail humans need it most, God comes. Merry Christmas!