



All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings

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From Reader Review All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings for online ebook

John says

A wonderful Advent journey exploring a different animal each day and learning how they survive the winter, ending with the King of Creation. As an adult, i found it amazing and it led me to a greater appreciation for wonders of nature. Would be great to share with a animal loving child or a science enthusiast.

Kelly Barker says

Beautiful story about creation anticipating the coming spring, which is a mirror to our anticipation of the coming Christ child. Definitely one we will read again in the future.

Lisa says

I would like to give this book 4.5 stars. Boss is a powerful and lyrical writer, and I savored every sentence. The accompanying woodcuts were gorgeous, as was the quality of the paper, design, etc. The only reason I didn't give it 5 stars was because I would have preferred a bit more of an explicit link between the animal and human worlds, as we get for the reading on Dec. 25. But it's wonderful, and well worth buying for the nature lovers in your life.

Anne White says

"Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God. If I spend enough time with the tiniest creature, even a caterpillar, I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God is every creature." ~~ Meister Eckhart, quoted as a preface to All Creation Waits

In his review of All Creation Waits, writer Brian Doyle refers to it as a "sidelong" book, which I take to mean indirect, something like a parable. In twenty-five short readings, accompanied with woodcut illustrations, Gayle Boss takes you on an early-winter walk around Lake Michigan, with stop-offs to visit skunks, foxes, porcupines, and other local inhabitants. What are they doing at this time of year? As "all creation waits" for the Advent of the Saviour, animal activities are lyrically described, but without much added-on interpretation. This is not a book of prayers or Scriptures; the animals are not analogies; they do not think of much beyond shelter and food, and they have no imagined sense that Christmas is coming. It reminds me more of Prayers from the Ark [by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold], or some of the Christmas readings that take the viewpoint of the cow and the spider; or the muskrat scene at the beginning of [Laura Ingalls Wilder's] The Long Winter.

A sample from the chapter "Whitetail Deer":

"Gliding through the woods in groups of two, three, or four, their coats the color of brush and bark render

them nearly invisible to us. So when, in October, we see herds of them out in the open, it seems a curtain has been pulled back on a secret society. They know the cold is coming. Banding together against predators, they forage widely in the fields before their food freezes, or vanishes under snow.

"But then, a drive deeper than feeding seizes them. By November both bucks and does, restless, verge on reckless. Trumping food and wariness, the primal urge to reproduce one's self and one's kind surges with the winds of the coming, killing cold."

This book would be most suitable for families with children, who perhaps are looking for something non-commercial but also not directly Bible-related for Advent reading times. [One possible note of caution: there are occasional references to mating which might or might not be appropriate for some families.] It could be useful for homeschoolers, or for those who need a set of readings for less-usual, out-of-church situations. It is a good reminder that the animals are (still, thankfully) all around us. Their stories are a (sidelong) glimpse of the way God creates and sustains them--and us.

Statement of disclosure: I received a complimentary e-copy of this book for purposes of review, but I was not otherwise compensated for this review. All opinions are my own.

Julie Hulten says

Even if Advent is part of your holiday preparation, this is a marvelous, thought-provoking, quieting, moving day-by-day of the natural world and we approach nature's 'darkest' day, the Winter solstice. I have started a new tradition at our house - a daily reading - out loud. A lovely way to start the day. Peace!

Connie says

I loved using this book in Advent this year (2016). Each meditation focuses on a single creature, and I have to say that I think I learned something every day. The prose is lovely and poetic, as well as informative, without being preachy-- Boss allows us the time and space to draw our own connections to the spiritual life in general (and our own in particular), inviting the reader into contemplation. The illustrations by David Klein are stunning.

Debra Waites says

What a beautiful little book! An Advent unlike one you find in a church, unless it be the wider Church and its congregants be the Critters of that universal Body. Whimsical, lyrical as the author tells the story of how the creatures who share our earth respond to the dark and cold of the winter solstice.

Chris says

A Michigan naturalist's Advent calendar, full of fascinating animal behaviors. The illustrations are especially great, charming yet unsentimental. The theological reflection is a bit repetitive, but subtle, and it holds up

well at the intended, daily dose. Highly recommended, and not only for Christians or other devotional readers.

Heather says

I heard about this author in an issue of Guideposts magazine. Needing a way to enjoy stillness this Advent season, I ordered her book.

The book is based on an Advent calendar that the author used with her sons every year. Each day there was a woodland animal and a story about how that animal relates to waiting for the coming of Christ.

This calendar inspired her book, with a naturalistic essay about an animal for each day of Advent. It highlights what each animal does to wait out the dark. Some hibernate and lie still, some live life on a knife's edge of not too much and not too little food, and some even die to make way for a new generation.

After a very difficult year, all of these metaphors gave me some peace and a feeling of permission to wait for the warmth of spring--to make this Christmas about my spirit instead of my money.

Tim Street says

A wonderful, alternative take on the season of Advent as a time of darkness and waiting. It's a powerful reminder to embrace the darkness and discomfort of the winter season, enduring until the good news comes along.

"The dark is not an end, but a door. This is the way a new beginning comes.... animals unselfconsciously and forthrightly offer unfearful responses. They take in the threat of dark and cold, and they adapt in amazing and ingenious ways. They shape themselves to life as it is given."

Cindy Rollins says

Peaceful Advent

I looked forward to each day's animal and readings and the lovely etchings too. Gayle's word sketches remind us that we each prepare for Christ's advent in different ways. Some of us hunker down to heal, some of us brazen it out but eventually each of us reaches the of ourselves ready to say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

These sketches tell how individual animals prepare for winter. The tone is soothing but the facts are fascinating. Highly recommended. I think most children used to read alouds would also like this; but it is not just for children.

Cynthia Graham says

This book is perfectly subdued for those dark winter's nights when the world seems to be holding its breath. The black and white illustrations perfectly compliment the author's insights into nature and its anticipation of new life. The stories are lovely, in particular the eastern firefly. If you are looking for a gentle advent story that evokes simplicity and peace, you will appreciate this book.

J. Bill says

Though we Quakers normally eschew recognizing "holy-days," believing as we do, that no day is more holy than any other, I must confess that Advent is my favorite of the liturgical seasons. I love the poetry, songs, art, and anticipation of this special time -- the hope that it embodies.

Still, as a Friend, I remain fully rooted in the sacramental potential that each day's quotidian activities afford. Hence the title of my blog -- "Holy Ordinary." So I was delighted to receive a copy of All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings.

In this delightful book by Gayle Boss (illustrated by David G. Klein) the wonder of advent is unveiled in a fresh way through the most natural life of this world -- that of God's humblest creatures. Boss takes us into the very heart of humble words of Romans 8:22 that "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." We humans far too often make Christian faith all about us -- seeing ourselves as the pinnacle of life on earth. Boss's book reminds that we are a part of the "whole creation" and that advent is a "mystery of new beginnings."

Instead of wise men, shepherds, or even sanitized sheep of most congregational Christmastime crèches, we are invited into the world of chipmunks, raccoons, wild turkeys, lake trout, and even snakes (who often get little respect from Christians who have a memory of a certain serpent in Eden). Boss opens her introduction with a quote from Meister Eckhart:

Every single creature is full of God
and is a book about God.

Every creature is a word of God.

If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature--
even a caterpillar--
I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God
is every creature.

She then takes us into worlds of burrowy, hibernating, downy anticipation of new creation. Her short meditations reveal the peace and grace of the wild things that are as surely a part of God's creation as are we. Boss presents us with stories of hope amidst the animals' realities of cold, predators, and privation of the season. Realities that many of us, wrapped in a warm houses filled with food and family, forget. Our biggest discomforts rarely amount to first world inconveniences. Yet, much of the world identifies with realities faced by our animal friends. We would do well to do so, as well. They remind us that many of us live in a consumer society that has us dangling a hair's breadth from economic disaster -- and that death and despair

can stalk even we comfortable middle class Americans. And yet, there is still a hope that is eternal. Advent and Boss's meditations remind us of that.

Wendell Berry once wrote:

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

All Creation Waits takes us into the peace -- and grace and hope -- of wild things and the mystery and blessing of Advent. You'll want to get a copy for you, your family, and others you love.

Martha says

As a local church pastor, I love to share resources with my church members designed to enhance their experience of Advent as a season of preparation as opposed to a season of shopping. I want to take on some kind of practice myself, but as a pastor and a parent, I'm often stretched to the limit getting both church and family Christmas ready. This lovely book meets the need without requiring more than the busy person of faith can give.

All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings, by Gayle Boss (and illustrated by David G. Klein), offers meditations on wild animals and the way they live into the increasing darkness as winter approaches. Boss places the animals (from meadow vole to firefly to cottontail to bear) in their habitats and describes their seeming states of mind as well as the way their bodies have evolved to survive the encroaching cold. Each two page meditation serves to take the reader out of the everyday scramble of human life and into the natural world, deeper and deeper into the shortening days.

He should not be here. Not in the basement window well where he fell sometime in the night, sniffing out food. Not in Michigan, nor in any other state where winter temperatures sit below freezing many days in succession. We lift the opossum, held in the clasp of two rakes. When we open those gates and he quick-waddles into the woods, I bow to him, to the wonder of his survival.

Klein's woodcuts detail the world of each animal, yet leave room for imagination. While this is not a children's book, it is a book for many ages, and one a family could read together. The paper, as is characteristic for Paraclete, is gorgeous, making this a book that feels good in the hand. We are all waiting for Jesus to arrive, for God to break in, and this beautiful book is a fine companion for the season.

I received a copy of this book from Paraclete Press in exchange for an honest review.

Amanda Rogozinski says

I think this book captures the spirit of Advent in a truer way than anything I have ever come across. With tasteful subtlety this book is all about waiting in hope in the darkest of times. All of the accounts of animals are full of details that are fascinating and I would have never learned otherwise, but they speak on a deeper level than mere knowledge. I will be re-reading this book yearly. The illustrations perfectly compliment the text also. They are full-page and high contrast black and white woodcuts that make you feel that you are seeing into the creatures' soul.

Review copy courtesy of Paraclete Press
