

1st December 2025 – The first day of Advent

Sharing

“The true virtue of human beings is fitness to live together as equals: claiming nothing for themselves but what they freely concede to everyone else.”

John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, *The Subjugation of Women* (1863)

Now that we're in Advent and begin to prepare for Christmas properly, I'll share with you from time to time some material I've written over the years. I do that for two reasons: firstly, because there's no point in reinventing the wheel, and if something that's been written in the past still has a point to make, it surely bears repeating; and secondly, it allows me to do my own Advent reflecting, and gives me the opportunity to look back on, and enjoy, some of what I've had published, often from years ago. I'll reference the sources too, so you can explore the pieces more fully as you wish.

For *An Advent Calendar: In God's Time* (www.ionabooks.com) I had the privilege of writing a piece about the meaning of sharing in the run-up to Christmas. After all, we're all in this together, all equals, all seeking togetherness as Advent unfolds. But here's how it can go wrong, when two brothers weren't willing to concede *anything* to the other ...

Andrew and Robert had inherited a smallholding from their father, Angus, and Angus was a fair man. He'd made sure his sons had equal shares when he died. There were two fields for the cattle and two barns for the hay. There were an equal number of milking cows and two vegetable gardens. Everything fair. But there was only one cart. Angus had always meant to get a second cart, but it was costly, and time ran out. So Andrew and Robert had to share the cart. But they could never agree. Andrew needed it for the hay, but Robert wanted to take churns to the dairy. Robert needed it to collect supplies, when Andrew wanted to move fenceposts from the yard. Their relationship deteriorated. One night, in a drunken rage, Andrew said he'd had enough of this. "Our father wanted it to be fair," he roared. "So I'll make sure we get equal shares." And he took a saw and cut the cart in half. "It's equal now," he shouted. "You have your half, and I have mine." The cart lay in two pieces for years, for the two brothers were never reconciled. Eventually they sold up, and the buildings, fields and broken cart, were left to crumble and decay.

Wouldn't be a shame if our Christmas sharing went wrong because we were unwilling to make any concessions and failed to live together as equals.

A prayer for today

Life-giver, you made us as equals.

Forgive us when our selfishness causes offence to you and harm to others. Amen