



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday, December 23, 2012

Writers for This Unit: The African American Lectionary Team

The unit you are viewing, Fourth Sunday of Advent, is a compact unit. This means that it does not have a supporting cultural resource unit and worship unit. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided scriptural text(s) that we suggest for this moment on the calendar along with a sermon outline, suggested links, books, articles, songs, and videos. For additional information on Advent, see the archives of the Lectionary for 2008–2011.

I. Description of the Liturgical Moment

Although she wrote these words for the Second Sunday of Advent, the sentiments of Diana L. Hayes's 2010 Lectionary Commentary apply to this Fourth Sunday of Advent as well:

Today we celebrate the second Sunday of Advent, a time of hope and anticipation, as we await the birth of the Christ child. Historically seen as a time of preparation but also a time of penitence, we review our lives and look ahead to Jesus' birth and the joys and challenges it brings. Advent is a time of journeying with all of the faithful to renewed life in Christ. It is also a time of celebration of God's first breaking into human history and a reminder of his promise to come again. We recognize in the revelation of God in Jesus that all of creation is reconciled to God. As we wait in joyful expectation, we also pay heed to our own responsibility in helping to bring about a more just and peaceful world.

As African Americans especially, we acknowledge as his mother did that Jesus has come to restore the balance of the world so that it leans towards justice and away from evil. Jesus is the one who righted the wrongs of humanity and blessed us with hope for a better day.

Riggins Earl, Jr., Guest Cultural Resource Commentator for Advent in 2009 wrote:

How do you prophetically and in a priestly way challenge a waiting oppressed people to prepare ritualistically (i.e., by “repenting,” “confessing,” and “being baptized”) for the coming of their liberator? How do you prophetically and in a priestly manner challenge oppressors to prepare ritualistically (i.e., by “repenting,” “confessing,” and “being baptized”) for the advent of the Lord and Judge of them and their systems of injustice?

With the thoughtful comments of these writers as our backdrop, we present a sermonic outline for the Fourth Sunday of Advent 2012.

II. Fourth Sunday of Advent: Sermonic Outline

A. Sermonic Focus Text: Micah 5:1-5 (New Revised Standard Version)

(v. 1) Now you are walled around with a wall; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel upon the cheek. (v. 2) But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. (v. 3) Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. (v. 4) And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; (v. 5) and he shall be the one of peace.

B. Possible Titles

- i. How Shall We Wait?
- ii. The Peacemaker Is Coming
- iii. Waiting While Working on Peace

C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry

Micah prophesied good news in the midst of a horrible reality for his people. Can such preaching still gain a hearing? How can today’s preacher speak joyously of watchfully waiting for “The Prince of Peace” amidst so much war around the world and particularly amidst so much bloodshed through black on black violence?

III. Introduction

Some have called Micah the “Christmas Prophet” since he correctly prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). When asked in Matthew 2:5 where would the king of the Jews be born, the scribes quoted Micah’s words. Micah was a younger contemporary of the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. His name is the shortened form of the older Micayahu (Whyꞑkmi) “Who is like Yahweh?” He hailed from Moresheth, which is likely a rural town not far from Jerusalem, mentioned in Micah 1:14.

Throughout most of the book named for him, Micah proclaims destruction for Israel due to its sin and unwillingness to follow the laws of God. As he speaks in today’s text, the destruction has come. We can relate. All around us, near and far, there is destruction; we are under siege. However, in the fourth and fifth chapters of Micah, he proclaimed God’s future blessings, the main blessing being the arrival of Christ which Micah indicates in today’s text. In addition to announcing the arrival, Micah proclaims, “And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace” (Micah 5:5).

This Advent season preachers will have to work rigorously to make some listeners believe that this is a season of joy and peace. However, just as Micah truly prophesied that the people of God would be secure because of the One who “shall be great to the ends of the earth, and he shall be one peace,” so too must preacher embrace this message and preach it with the certainty that Micah had when he announced it so long ago.

IV. Moves/Points

Move/Point One – There is good news amidst bad news.

- a. A people are under siege; and
- b. Good can happen even when we are under siege.

Move/Point Two – The One Who Is to Come has an old origin.

- a. Micah prophesies the coming of the Messiah; and
- b. The Messiah shall feed his flock in the strength of the Lord.

Move/Point Three – The Messiah is a peacemaker.

- a. The Messiah shall bring security; and
- b. There is security in the One who bring peace.

V. Celebration

Although it is a blessed season of gift giving and merriment for so many, this is also a season of lament and languishing, especially for those in the black community. But (the divine conjunction) those who wait in faith do not wait in vain. Those who work for peace while they

wait do not wait in vein. Those who wait expecting an in-breaking of the One who comes among us again and again do not wait in vein. Our Savior will show up just as Micah said. This is our belief; this is the reason for the season. This is our hope, come what may. We are sometimes cast down, but never defeated. Come Lord Jesus, come!

VI. Illustration(s)

On a Rather Insignificant Sphere

A senior angel is showing a very young angel around the splendors of the universe. They view whirling galaxies and blazing suns, and then flit across the infinite distances of space until at last they enter one particular galaxy of 500 billion stars.

As the two of them draw near to the star which we call our sun and to its circling planets, the senior angel pointed to a small and rather insignificant sphere turning very slowly on its axis. It looked as dull as a dirty tennis ball to the angel, whose mind was filled with the size and glory of what he had seen.

“I want you to watch that one particularly,” said the senior angel, pointing with his finger.

“Well, it looks very small and rather dirty to me,” said the little angel. “What’s special about that one?”

To the little angel, earth did not seem so impressive. He listened in stunned disbelief as the senior angel told him that this planet, small and insignificant and not overly clean, was the renowned Visited Planet.

“Do you mean that our great and glorious Prince ... went down in Person to this fifth-rate little ball? Why should He do a thing like that?” ...

The little angel’s face wrinkled in disgust. “Do you mean to tell me,” he said, “that He stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures of that floating ball?”

“I do, and I don’t think He would like you to call them ‘creeping, crawling creatures’ in that tone of voice. For, strange as it may seem to us, He loves them. He went down to visit them to lift them up to become like Him.”

The little angel looked blank. Such a thought was almost beyond his comprehension.

—JB Phillips. The Jesus I Never Knew, pp. 43–44

Understanding the Season

A little girl was pushing the limits of her mother’s very last nerve. Mom was nearing the end of a hectic season of cooking, cleaning, shopping, wrapping, and church stuff. She was also nearing the breaking point with her little preschooler.

Finally, the little girl was bathed and ready for bed. As she knelt to say her prayers, Mom listened as her sweet three year old theologian “customized” her evening prayer, ...And forgive us our Christmases, as we forgive those who Christmas against us!

—Submitted by Russell Brownworth

The Promise

Singer Michael Card wrote a song called “The Promise,” and he wrote a little Christmas devotional on this theme. He noted:

Christianity is founded on a promise. Faith involves waiting on a promise. Our hope is based on a promise. Promises are made with words. ... that part of myself that goes with every promise is given to you through my words....

Our God is the great maker of promises... His word, our Bible, is a collection of the promises... most of these concern Jesus, who came to be known as “the Promised One”

Through all these promises, God was trying to give something of Himself to Adam, and to Israel, and finally to us. The Bible tells us that when the Promised One came, the Lord poured all of Himself into Him.

What a costly thing it can be to make a promise—it cost Jesus His life.

VII. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in This Passage

Sounds: The sounds of a siege; a ruler being struck; the sounds of peace;

Sights: A city under siege; crumbled rocks of destroyed homes; rulers under siege; the sad and hopeless faces of burdened people; a woman in labor giving birth; the arrival of the Savior; the Savior feeding his flock; the relieved and happy faces of those who await and receive the coming Savior; and

Colors: The colors associated with a city under siege (bloodshed, destroyed homes, miles and miles of gray brick walls around a city); people in the dull, lifeless colors of sackcloth; people in bright festive colors of celebration—red, blue, and purple.

VIII. Songs to Accompany This Sermon

A. Well-known Song(s)

- Someday. By Charles Tinley
- Brighter Day. By Kirk Franklin

- I'm Not Finished. Traditional
- Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus. By Johannes Cruger and Charles Wesley
- Hallelujah. Traditional
- No Ways Tired. By Curtis Burrell

B. Spiritual(s) and Hymns

- It's in My Heart. By Arthur Slater. Arr. by J. G. Boersma
- Already Here. By Brian C. Wilson
- Come, Ye Thankful People, Come. By Henry Alford. Tune by George J. Elvey
- He Came Down. Cameroon Traditional. Arr. by John L. Bell

C. Liturgical Dance Music

- Wait on the Lord. By Donnie McClurkin
- God Will Take Care of You. Traditional

D. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer

- Thank You Jesus. By Chris Jasper
- We're Giving Our Lives to You First. By Kelly Chapman and Ryan Lott

E. Sermonic Selection(s)

- After Awhile. By Adelia Davis, John H. Myles, and Otis Spann
- Freedom Bells. By Danniebelle Hall and Rogers

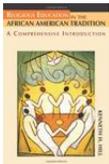
F. Benediction Song(s)

- Over and Over and Over. By Darius Brooks
- For Every Mountain. By Kurt Carr

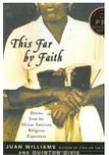
IX. Videos, Audio, and/or Interactive Media

- Advent Reflections #4. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZiaPvaK3Y-Q> accessed 24 May 2012.
- Advent Week 4: Love. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muPw2j6VCSw&feature=related> accessed 24 May 2012.
- “Awaiting the Christ Child,” an Advent meditation. Online location: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POm7_WBMJTI&feature=relmfu accessed 24 May 2012.

X. Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons, Bible Studies, and/or Worship Services Related to Advent



Hill, Kenneth H. Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction. Duluth, GA: Chalice Press, 2007.



Williams, Juan, and Quinton H. Dixie. This Far by Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2003.

XI. Links to Helpful Websites for Advent

- Advent Poetry Page. Online location: http://www.journeywithjesus.net/PoemsAndPrayers/Advent_Poetry.shtml accessed 24 May 2012
- Advent Themes. Online location: <http://liturgyoutside.net/AdventChristmas.html> accessed 24 May 2012
- Advent Crafts for Kids. Online location: <http://www.first-school.ws/activities/bible/advent1.htm> accessed 24 May 2012

XII. Notes for Select Songs

A. Well-known Song(s)

- Someday. By Charles Tinley
Location:
Broadway Inspirational Voices. Grace. St. Louis, MO: Silverwolf Records, 2003.
- Brighter Day. By Kirk Franklin
Location:

The Rebirth of Kirk Franklin. New York, NY: Jive, 2002.

- I'm Not Finished. Traditional
Location:
McCullough, Jackie. This Is for You Lord. New York, NY: Zomba, 1998.
- Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus. By Johannes Cruger and Charles Wesley
Location:
Bishop, James. The Reverend James Bishop Sings the Hymns of Charles Wesley. New York, NY: Epic, 2007.
- Hallelujah. Traditional
Location:
Slaughter, Alvin. Overcomer. New York, NY: Columbia, 2008.
- No Ways Tired. By Curtis Burrell
Location:
Burrell, Kim. No Ways Tired. Newton, NJ: Shanachie Records, 2009.

B. Spiritual(s) and Hymns

- It's in My Heart. By Arthur Slater. Arr. by J. G. Boersma
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #416
- Already Here. By Brian C. Wilson
Location:
Zion Still Sings for Every Generation. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007. #55
- Come, Ye Thankful People, Come. By Henry Alford. Tune by George J. Elvey
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #194
- He Came Down. Cameroon Traditional. Arr. by John L. Bell
Location:
Zion Still Sings. #54

C. Liturgical Dance Music

- Wait on the Lord. By Donnie McClurkin
Location:
McClurkin, Donnie and Karen Clark-Sheard. We All Are One: Live in Detroit. New York, NY: Verity, 2008
- God Will Take Care of You. Traditional
Location:

Franklin, Aretha. Amazing Grace. New York, NY: Atlantic, 1972.

D. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer

- Thank You Jesus. By Chris Jasper
Location:
Praise the Eternal. South Salem, NY: Gold City Music, 1992.
- We're Giving Our Lives to You First. By Kelly Chapman and Ryan Lott
Location:
Chapman, Kelly. Real. Cleveland, OH: Lightworld Records, 2005.

E. Sermonic Selection(s)

- After Awhile. By Adelia Davis, John H. Myles, and Otis Spann
Location:
The Swan Silvertones. Heavenly Light. Beverly Hills, CA: Fantasy, 1993.
- Freedom Bells. By Danniebelle Hall and Rogers
Location:
Hall, Danniebelle. Designer's Original. New York, NY: A & M, 1992.

F. Benediction Song(s)

- Over and Over, and Over. By Darius Brooks
Location:
Brunson, Milton & The Thompson Community Singers. 50 Blessed Years. New York, NY: Word, 1998.
- For Every Mountain. By Kurt Carr
Location:
Wow Gospel 1999. New York, NY: Verity, 1999.