

## **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (LOVE)**

**Sunday, December 22, 2013**

**Guest Writer for This Unit:** Brian Bantum, Lectionary Team Commentator

The unit you are viewing, Fourth Sunday of Advent (Love), is a compact unit. This means that it is not a complete commentary of the Scripture(s) selected for this day on the calendar, nor does it have a full, supporting cultural resource unit and worship unit. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided a sermonic outline, songs, suggested books, and suggested articles, links, and videos. For additional information see Advent in the archives of the Lectionary for 2009–2012.

### **I. Description of the Liturgical Moment**

The culmination of the Advent season returns us to the announcement of Christ's coming and that God is with us. Mary's proclamation calls us to be reminded that our joy does not rest solely in our material comfort or discomfort but in a divine promise that has been fulfilled in the eternal Word becoming flesh and God becoming like us in the deepest sense of the word. In the previous week, we saw joy as being regarded by God, of knowing that our difficult circumstances were not the entirety of our lives, of knowing that God regards us, that God sees us. And from this space of joy, we see our lives in new ways.

We see the filling out of our lives as those who are hungry are nourished; love is the assurance that evil's reign is beat back in an infant's cry. The Advent celebration of love is to recall and celebrate how God has filled and is filling and will fill every gap in our broken lives and in our broken world. With this material as our backdrop, we provide a sermonic outline for the Fourth Week in Advent with Love as our theme.

### **II. Fourth Sunday of Advent (Love): Sermonic Outline**

**A. Sermonic Focus Text(s):** Luke 1:46-51 (New Revised Standard Version)

And Mary said,  
'My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

## **B. Possible Titles**

- i. Taste and See
- ii. Love Has Come
- iii. Let Us Magnify the Lord!

## **C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry**

In any text, there can be several words or phrases that require significant exegetical inquiry. One exegetical inquiry raised by this text is what is meant by the phrase: "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked upon me with favor on the lowliness of his servant." How does the blessing of being *seen* by God speak of the power of the Christ's birth for those who personally experienced it and for us today?

## **III. Introduction**

"Mary's Song" is an exaltation of praise that points to a God who is faithful and to a God who sees the fullness of who we are and our situation. In Mary's response to the news that she will be with child, we see that the promise of God to Mary and to Israel has a two-fold effect in the world. Both the lowly and the prideful are seen; those who are hungry are nourished and those who are prideful are brought low.

#### **IV. Moves/Points**

##### **Move/Point One – Love is seeing and being seen.**

- a. In Mary's declaration that God has seen her, what does God see? God sees a poor girl, a girl from a people who are on the outside. But God also sees a girl with deep hope, peace, joy, and love.
- b. God sees not only this girl, but her people. God sees the reality of their condition under Roman rule.
- c. To love is to truly be seen by another and for another to see who we really are. In the angel's annunciation to Mary, God declares that she is truly seen and loved.

##### **Move/Point Two – Love is justice for the destitute and for the proud.**

- a. In Jesus' coming the presence of God becomes a judgment. The birth of Christ demands a response and will require something of everyone.
- b. Jesus' coming is a presence that will both comfort and convict. Those who mourn and grieve and who recognize their dependence will be met. God will come upon them.
- c. But those whose lives are bound to pride and their own certainty will be confronted with the truest sense of power and authority. The proud will be set back in the abundance of God become flesh.

##### **Move/Point Three – Love fills us with good things.**

- a. In the incarnation God identifies with hunger, with injustice, knowing the desperation and loneliness of our human lives.
- b. In the midst of this desperation God enters in not only to identify with our suffering, but to eat with us and to offer himself. His body is a good thing for us, filling our hunger and meeting our every need.
- c. In Jesus' birth we wait expectantly for peace, for joy, for love—and in his birth we are seen, we are justified, we are fed. In the incarnation, we see love and what it means to be filled with good things.

#### **V. Celebration**

The song "Love Lifted Me" by James Rowe says, "Love lifted me. Love lifted me. When nothing else could help, love lifted me." Isn't it the truth: love lifted all of us. We were not too far away from God, not too far down in our mess, not too far down in our self-involvement for

God to reach us. What a mighty and matchless God we serve, one who reached out from a stable to say to us once and for all, you're valued, you are my elect, you are loved. The song declares: "All my heart to Him I give, ever to him I'll cling, in his blessed presence live, ever his praises sing. Love so mighty and so true, merits my soul's best song. Faithful, loving service too, to Him belongs. Love lifted me. Love lifted me. Even when nothing else could help, love lifted me!"

## **VI. Illustration(s)**

### **Sacrificial Love**

I took Helen (eight years old) and Brandon (five years old) to the Cloverleaf Mall in Hattiesburg to do a little shopping. As we drove up, we spotted a Peterbilt eighteen-wheeler parked with a big sign on it that said, "Petting Zoo." The kids jumped up in a rush and asked, "Daddy, Daddy. Can we go? Please. Please. Can we go?"

"Sure," I said, flipping them both a quarter before walking into Sears. They bolted away, and I felt free to take my time looking for a scroll saw. A petting zoo consists of a portable fence erected in the mall with about six inches of sawdust and a hundred little furry baby animals of all kinds. Kids pay their money and stay in the enclosure enraptured with the squirmy little critters while their moms and dads shop.

A few minutes later, I turned around and saw Helen walking along behind me. I was shocked to see she preferred the hardware department to the petting zoo. Recognizing my error, I bent down and asked her what was wrong.

She looked up at me with those giant limpid brown eyes and said sadly, "Well, Daddy, it cost fifty cents. So, I gave Brandon my quarter." Then she said the most beautiful thing I ever heard. She repeated the family motto. The family motto is in "Love is Action!"

She had given Brandon her quarter, and no one loves cuddly furry creatures more than Helen. She had watched Sandy take my steak and say, "Love is Action!" She had watched both of us do and say "Love is Action!" for years around the house and Kings Arrow Ranch. She had heard and seen "Love is Action," and now she had incorporated it into her little lifestyle. It had become part of her.

What do you think I did? Well, not what you might think. As soon as I finished my errands, I took Helen to the petting zoo. We stood by the fence and watched Brandon go crazy petting and feeding the animals. Helen stood with her hands and chin resting on the fence and just watched Brandon. I had fifty cents burning a hole in my pocket; I never offered it to Helen, and she never asked for it.

Because she knew the whole family motto. It's not "Love is Action." It's "Love is SACRIFICIAL Action!" Love always pays a price. Love always costs something. Love is expensive. When you love, benefits accrue to another's account. Love is for you, not for me. Love gives; it doesn't grab. Helen gave her quarter to Brandon and wanted to follow through

with her lesson. She knew she had to taste the sacrifice. She wanted to experience that total family motto. Love is sacrificial action.

—Dave Simmons, Dad, The Family Coach  
(Victor Books, 1991), 123–124

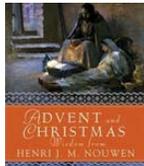
## VII. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in This Passage

**Sounds:** Choral sounds of praise;

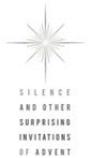
**Sights:** Moving from darkness to light, a darkened room becomes full of light; and

**Colors:** Darkness; light; the colors of the Advent Season.

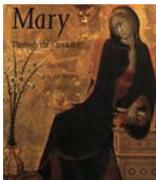
## VII. Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons or Bible Studies Related to Advent



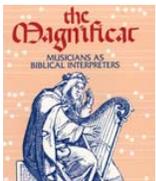
Nouwen, Henri. Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J. M. Nouwen: Daily Scripture and Prayers Together with Nouwen's Own Words. Ligouri, MO: Ligouri Press, 2004.



Okoro, Enuma. Silence and Other Surprising Invitations of Advent. Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2012.



Pelikan, Jaroslav. Mary Through the Centuries. New Haven, CT: Yale, 1996.



Terrien, Samuel. The Magnificat: Musicians as Biblical Interpreters. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1995.

## VIII. Helpful Website for Holy Advent

<http://www.liturgies.net/Advent/advent.htm>

## **IX. Songs to Accompany This Sermon**

### **A. Hymn(s)**

- Great Is Thy Faithfulness. By Thomas Chisolm and William Runyan
- O, Come All Ye Faithful. By John F. Wade. Trans. by Frederick Oakeley. Tune, (ADESTE FIDELES), by John F. Wade
- Love Divine, All Love Excelling. By Charles Wesley. Tune, (BEECHER), by John Zundel
- Savior, Like a Shepherd, Lead Us. By Dorothy A. Thrupp. Tune, (BRADBURY), by William Bradbury

### **B. Modern Song(s)**

- We Love You. By Byron Cage and J. Moss
- Amazing Love. By Carol Cymbala and Jason Michael Webb
- The Love Medley (God's Gift). By Greg Booth
- Mary Did You Know. By Mark Lowry

### **C. Congregational Song(s)**

- His Name Is Wonderful. Text and Tune by Audrey Mieir
- I Love You, Lord, Today. Text and Tune by William F. Hubbard
- Bow Down. By David Baroni and Tony Sutherland

### **D. Gospel Song(s) for Choirs, Ensembles, or Praise Teams**

- Your Love Divine. By Richard Smallwood
- Special Gift. By Walter Hawkins
- Worship, and Honor, and Love. By Rose Harper

### **E. Offertory Song(s)**

- Bring a Gift of Love. Text and Tune by Mary Kay Bottens
- I Really Love. By Norman Hutchins and Jason White
- You Can't Beat God Giving. Text and Tune by Doris Akers

#### **F. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer**

- More Love to Thee. By Elizabeth Prentiss. Tune, (MORE LOVE TO THEE), by William H. Doane
- Fill My Cup, Lord. Text and Tune, (FILL MY CUP), by Richard Blanchard
- My Jesus, I Love Thee. By William R. Featherston. Tune, (GORDON), by Adoniram J. Gordon

#### **G. Invitational Song(s)**

- Love Lifted Me. By James Rowe. Tune, (SAFETY), by Howard E. Smith
- Is There Any Room in Your Heart for Jesus? Text and Tune by Wyatt Tee Walker
- I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry. Text and Tune by Richard Smallwood

#### **H. Song(s) for Benediction or Sending Forth**

- Soon and Very Soon. Text and Tune, (SOON AND VERY SOON), by Andraé Crouch
- God Be with You. Text and Tune by Andraé Crouch

#### **X. Notes for Select Songs**

##### **A. Hymn(s)**

- Great Is Thy Faithfulness. By Thomas Chisolm and William Runyan  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #158  
  
African Methodist Episcopal Church Hymnal. Nashville, TN: The African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2004. #84  
  
Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. Memphis, TN: Church of God in Christ Pub. Board in association with the Benson Co., 1982. #122

- O Come, All Ye Faithful. By John F. Wade. Trans. by Frederick Oakeley. Tune, (ADESTE FIDELES), by John F. Wade  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #199  
  
African Methodist Episcopal Church Hymnal. #106  
  
Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #203
- Love Divine, All Love Excelling. By Charles Wesley. Tune, (BEECHER), by John Zundel  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #440
- Savior, Like a Shepherd, Lead Us. By Dorothy A. Thrupp. Tune, (BRADBURY), by William Bradbury  
Location:  
Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #385

#### **B. Modern Song(s)**

- We Love You. By Byron Cage and J. Moss  
Location:  
Cage, Byron. An Invitation to Worship. Inglewood, CA: Gospocentric Records, 2005.
- Amazing Love. By Carol Cymbala and Jason Michael Webb  
Location:  
The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. A Brooklyn Tabernacle Christmas. Colorado Springs, CO: Integrity Music, 2010.
- The Love Medley (God's Gift). By Greg Booth  
Location:  
Shekinah Glory Ministry. How Deeply. Oak Forest, IL: Kingdom Records, 2012.
- Mary Did You Know. By Mark Lowry  
Location:  
Mary Did You Know: A Mark Lowry Christmas. New York, NY: Springhouse/EMI, 2004.

#### **C. Congregational Song(s)**

- His Name Is Wonderful. Text and Tune by Audrey Mieir  
Location:  
Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #218

- I Love You, Lord, Today. Text and Tune by William F. Hubbard  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #580
- Bow Down. By David Baroni and Tony Sutherland  
Location:  
The Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship Mass Choir. Bow Down and Worship Him.  
Nashville, TN: Zomba Music Group, 1998.

#### **D. Gospel Song(s) for Choirs, Ensembles, or Praise Teams**

- Your Love Divine. By Richard Smallwood  
Location:  
Beginnings. Nashville, TN: Word Entertainment, 2012.
- Special Gift. By Walter Hawkins  
Location:  
McClurkin, Donnie. The Essential Donnie. New York, NY: Verity, 2007.
- Worship, and Honor, and Love. By Rose Harper  
Location:  
Shekinah Glory Ministry. Worship. Oak Forest, IL: Kingdom Records, 2012.

#### **E. Offertory Song(s)**

- Bring a Gift of Love. Text and Tune by Mary Kay Bottens  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #669
- I Really Love. By Norman Hutchins and Jason White  
Location:  
Hutchins, Norman. Where I Long to Be. Los Angeles, CA: JDI Records, 2006.
- You Can't Beat God Giving. Text and Tune by Doris Akers  
Location:  
The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. Nashville, TN: Triad Publications, 2005. #383

#### **F. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer**

- More Love to Thee. By Elizabeth Prentiss. Tune, (MORE LOVE TO THEE), by William H. Doane  
Location:  
The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #254

- Fill My Cup, Lord. Text and Tune, (FILL MY CUP), by Richard Blanchard  
Location:  
Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #359
- My Jesus, I Love Thee. By William R. Featherston. Tune, (GORDON), by Adoniram J. Gordon  
Location:  
The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship. Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989. #172

### **G. Invitational Song(s)**

- Love Lifted Me. By James Rowe. Tune, (SAFETY), by Howard E. Smith  
Location:  
The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #141
- Is There Any Room in Your Heart for Jesus? Text and Tune by Wyatt Tee Walker  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #353
- I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry. Text and Tune by Richard Smallwood  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #395

### **H. Song(s) for Benediction or Sending Forth**

- Soon and Very Soon. Text and Tune, (SOON AND VERY SOON), by Andraé Crouch  
Location:  
Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #168
- God Be with You. Text and Tune by Andraé Crouch  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #639