



Waiting with Wonder

ADVENT REFLECTIONS

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: THE WONDER OF LOVE

Advent is a season when we celebrate the light of Jesus coming into the world. This light gives us hope and shows us the way.

Advent is a season when we celebrate the light of Jesus coming into the world. This light comes to us as love – God’s infinitely compassionate and creative presence that can bring beauty from ashes and hope from the darkness.

In our service this week for the third Sunday of Advent, we reflected again on the story of Jesus’ birth in the Gospel of Matthew. Specifically, we looked at the “genealogy” of Jesus (his family lineage) found right at the beginning and which you can read in Matthew 1:1-17. At first glance it seems to be a fairly standard account listing Jesus’ ancestors in such a way as to show that he is thoroughly Jewish (he is descended from Abraham) and of royal blood (he is descended from King David). But on closer inspection there are several unusual qualities. One of these is that five mothers are mentioned which was not the normal tradition in the patriarchal culture of Jesus’ time. These women are:

- Tamar (you can read her story in Genesis 38)
- Rahab (you can read her story in Joshua 2)
- Ruth (you can read her story in Ruth 1-4)
- Bathsheba (she is referred to as “Uriah’s wife” and you can read her story in 2 Samuel 11-12)
- Mary (the mother of Jesus)

Each of these women represent stories in the history of Israel that reveal a number of things - the inclusion of non-Jewish people in Jesus’ lineage, women taking great agency for their cause, and men often behaving very harmfully. Jesus’ ancestry is far from the dignified stock you might expect for someone who is touted as being a “messiah”. There’s chaos, failure, cruelty, ignorance, and suffering. And it turns out that Jesus isn’t even the “Son of David” (of royal lineage) anyway! Yet this is how Jesus comes to us. This is incarnation. God is not ashamed of humanity and just as Jesus (the “Son of God”) is adopted into the human story, so we are adopted by God. Jesus shows us that we are all children of God, just like him. God’s love overcomes all the messiness of humanity, all the chaos of our lives, all our wrongdoing, all our fear and anxiety. This is the “wonder of love” that we wait for during Advent. Before lighting this week’s Advent candle, take some time to reflect on the following (the reflection continues overleaf):

- How are you a “Child of David”? What are some of the broken areas of your life that you need God’s love and light to transform? What might the year ahead look like in these areas if you let the light in?

- How are you a “Child of God”? Reflect back over the past year and remember specific times when you acted like a child of God with love, compassion, and courage. How have you experienced God’s presence, comfort, or empowerment this past year? Give thanks for those times.

Now light the first “hope” candle (purple) on your Advent wreath again. Then light the second “peace” candle (also purple). Then light this week’s rose (pink) candle representing love, and read the following scriptures:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir through God.

Galatians 4:4-7 (NRSVUE)

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

As you gaze into the flame, imagine God at work in your past, present, and future. Not in some controlling or manipulative way but working through love. Imagine God’s love burning like this candle with infinite compassion and creativity. A redemptive fire that can heal past hurts, bring beauty from the rubble of our failures, generate new growth in the deserts of our hearts, and overcome all our fears. Close by sitting in silence. Open your heart to the wonder of love and let the light in.