

# Goodness And Light



HE TOOK WITH HIM MARY, TO WHOM HE WAS ENGAGED,  
WHO WAS NOW EXPECTING A CHILD.

ADVENT SERMON SERIES

NOVEMBER 27 - DECEMBER 24

CHAPELWOOD.ORG/CHRISTMAS

## Going Beyond the Sermon

November 27: Do You See What I See?

December 4: - Do You Hear What I Hear?

December 11: Do You Know What I Know?

December 18: Listen to What I Say!

Noël Regney and Gloria Shayne Baker wrote *Do You Hear What I Hear?* in 1962 around the time of the Cuban missile crisis. Regney said, “In the studio, the producer was listening to the radio to see if we had been obliterated. Enroute to my home, I saw two mothers with their babies in strollers. The little angels were looking at each other and smiling.” This inspired the first line of the song: “Said the night wind to the little lamb ...” The rest of the song incorporates fragments of the Nativity as told in Matthew and Luke’s gospels. The song’s images of a king invoking all people to pray for peace and the promise of a child who will bring goodness and light speak to our hearts this Advent season.



*Said the night wind to the little lamb,  
do you see what I see  
Way up in the sky, little lamb,  
do you see what I see*

*A star, a star, dancing in the night  
With a tail as big as a kite  
With a tail as big as a kite*

### **S-Scripture: Genesis 1:1-5**

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup> the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup> Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

### **W-What Does It Mean and What Can I Obey?**

The first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the Christian calendar. How right to begin in the beginning of the Bible at the beginning of the year. The fundamental element of Light guides all human behavior. Before we move to the Star of Bethlehem as the light of Christmas, let us first contemplate the light of creation. "Genesis 1-2 tells the story of creation with poetic beauty and theological profundity. As you reflect on this familiar text, give rein to your imagination. Ponder the cosmos: its incomprehensible infinity, its mysterious quantum particles, the intricate web of life on earth. The eternal triune God spoke all this into being. And it was good. Imagine Eden: the fecundity, the sweet fruitfulness, the astounding biodiversity, the beauty of sight and sound. And think about the humans: unimpeded in their intimacy, unbounded in discovery and cultivation, unhampered in spiritual communion with the Creator. Yes, let yourself long for what was lost, that beauty, that innocence, that freedom, that joy." (From "Living the Christian Year, Time to Inhabit the Story of God" by Bobby Gross, p. 50)

### **A-Apply**

"As a season of anticipation, Advent calls us to a posture of alertness," writes Gross. For Christians, the practice of living into Advent as a spiritual season sets us apart from the culture. Its closest everyday analogy is pregnancy. The mother must mind her body and take certain precautions for the baby's health and yet, day by day in her ordinary life, the baby grows and develops. During Advent, we might take a day apart for reflection; we might choose to spend less than usual; or we may share the Gospel more readily with all the willing souls whose hearts are more attentive to Christ due to the season. Whether we take extra measures or not, Advent as a preparation of the coming of Christ is happening all around us – and within us.

"Be watchful and ready, Jesus repeatedly urged, because he could come at any time, like a burglar breaking into our home. So in these weeks of Advent we ask God to heighten our awareness of his presence, to open our eyes to what he is doing – in us and in the world. He may speak to us through the words of others, he may show himself in the face of someone in need, he may care for us through the kindness of friends, he may move us when we gather for worship, he may stir us through art or music, or he may whisper inwardly by his Spirit. Stay alert." (Living the Christian Year, p. 47)

As you imagine the creation story, what is stirred within you? Do you sense the Spirit hovering over the chaos? Can you see the Light coming into the world? Can you trust God's order of day and night to guide you? Sit with the image of creation that God places in your heart.

### **P- Pray**

Renew in me this day, O Lord, the hope of the new heaven and earth in which you will reign in light, and we will live in peace; meanwhile, may your kingdom come, and your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven; through Jesus Christ our coming King. Amen.

# December 4    Second Sunday in Advent    Do You Hear What I Hear?

*Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,  
do you hear what I hear  
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,  
do you hear what I hear*

*A song, a song, high above the trees  
With a voice as big as the sea  
With a voice as big as the sea*

## **S-Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-11**

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the LORD's  
hand double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries out:  
"In the wilderness prepare the way of  
the LORD; make straight in the desert a  
highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be  
made low; the uneven ground shall

become level, and the rough places a  
plain.

<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the LORD shall be  
revealed, and all flesh shall see it to-  
gether, for the mouth of the LORD has  
spoken."

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass; their constancy is like  
the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers; the flower fades,  
[when the breath of the LORD blows  
upon it; surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers; the flower fades,]  
but the word of our God will stand  
forever.

<sup>9</sup> Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good news;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;  
lift it up, do not fear; say to the  
cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"  
<sup>10</sup> See, the Lord GOD comes with  
might, and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him  
and his recompense before him.  
<sup>11</sup> He will feed his flock like a shep-  
herd; he will gather the lambs in his  
arms and carry them in his bosom  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

## **W-What Does It Mean and What Can I Obey?**

If last week our focus was on seeing the light of God, then this week we focus on listening to the voice of God. God, who spoke the world into creation, was at this time ready to announce Good News. The "attendants in the heavenly court of the Lord" cry out to announce that God is going to restore Zion after their time of exile. The road will be made smooth, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. The words of comfort are most welcome to the punished nation of Israel. They knew, better than most nations, that they were like grass that withers and flowers that fade. When Isaiah announced comfort, the Israelites were more than ready to accept the word of God that stands forever and to be fed by their Shepherd – with gentleness and great care.

## **A-Apply**

Advent is a time of waiting and a time of lament. "For many, this festive season accentuates our losses, our struggles, our disappointment. Around us we see greed and drivenness. In the news during these days of 'peace on earth, good will to all,' the ironies abound: war, poverty, violence, political machinations and disease. Our own vulnerabilities and temptations are heightened as well: loneliness, depression, addiction, materialism. So, we groan within ourselves, 'How long, O Lord, is life going to be like this?' Even as we cry out, we remember that evil in the world – and in us – merits God's judgment. His coming will bring fearsome but welcome justice. But also glory, a glory greater than our current suffering. So we lament the darkness in the world, the sin in ourselves and the judgment that will fall. But we do not succumb to despair. Ours is a hopeful lament as we prepare for the glory to be revealed." (Ibid p. 52)

In what ways do you feel like grass -- easily blown away by harsh winds? In what ways do you sense the discipline of God – loving and yet directed to you for your good? What are you lamenting in this season?

God desires to speak tenderly to you. What word of comfort do you need to hear from God this Advent season?

## **P-Pray**

As is true for all people, O Lord, I am like grass and my constancy like the flower of the field; grass withers, flowers fade, but your Word, O God, will stand forever. In your mercy, dear Lord, breathe on me this day. Amen.

# December 11    Third Sunday in Advent    Do You Know What I Know?

*Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,  
do you know what I know  
In your palace warm, mighty king,  
do you know what I know*

*A Child, a Child shivers in the cold  
Let us bring Him silver and gold  
Let us bring Him silver and gold*

## **S-Scripture: Matthew 20:24-28**

When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

## **W-What Does It Mean and What Can I Obey?**

James and John, through their mother, asked Jesus if they could sit at his right hand and at his left, in his kingdom. Jesus, who had just predicted his death on the cross for the third time, answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." This conversation angered the 10 other disciples. It is human nature to step over one another to get to the "top." Knowing this, the only way for God to overcome our sin nature was to become one of us. Isaiah 53: "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted . . . He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter." Finally, the time of the crucifixion is drawing near. Not long after that, both James and John will be martyred for the Lord's sake.

"Jesus corrects the disciples' selfish climbing over each other, but he does not reject their desire to be leaders," writes John L. Hiigel in "Partnering with the King." "He has chosen them for the purpose of making them into leaders. His response to their request is not, 'Quit aspiring to be a leader,' but rather, 'Do you grasp what you are signing up for? Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?'" The first disciples and all others who follow Christ will follow his path of humility. First, he was born in a humble stable with no status, power, or privilege. In death, he took the humble place on the cross. Because he made himself a servant, we learn to serve. "Disciples will exert spiritual power along with Jesus precisely as we cease our infatuation with worldly power, status, and honor. It is an upside-down kind of kingdom that has come near in Christ, and so we will exert world-changing power from the bottom upward." (P. 198)

## **A-Apply**

In the birth narratives of Jesus, the upside-down nature of his life is revealed. Angels announce his birth to lowly shepherds; kings worship the baby offering him their expensive treasures; common, yet faithful Jewish believers are chosen to be his mother, his earthly father, his cousins; his boyhood is spent in a carpenter's shop. That is the beauty of knowing Jesus. "Salvation had to occur here, in history, if it was to deal with the problems that exist in the human heart," explains Dennis F. Kinlaw in "This Day with the Master." "Now we can go to the exact spot in time and space where Christ died so we could live. Heaven is on its face in adoration and praise for a God who loves like this, and we should be as well. He became one of us. When you see Jesus face-to-face, he will look like you look. When you see Jesus, you're going to be able to touch him and feel him. In order to make our redemption possible, God assumed our nature for the rest of eternity."

Discipleship is marked by the ways we identify with or know Christ. In what ways have you drunk the cup that Jesus drank? What part of Jesus' suffering have you shared? How does Jesus comfort you in your suffering?

## **P-Pray**

Jesus, you humbled yourself to be born as a baby and to live a life filled with testing, trials, and suffering. Because of your sacrifice, I can drink the cup of salvation. May I live in humility for your sake. Thank you for making yourself known to me and seeing me as I am. Amen.

# December 18 Fourth Sunday in Advent Do You Know What I Know?

*Said the king to the people everywhere, I  
listen to what I say  
Pray for peace, people everywhere!  
listen to what I say*

*The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night  
He will bring us goodness and light  
He will bring us goodness and light*

## **S-Scripture: Revelation 21:1-7**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.’

And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.’

## **W-What Does It Mean and What Can I Obey?**

“It is easy to spot the echoes of Genesis 1-2 and Isaiah 40 in Revelation 21-22. As you read these visions of the future, allow the images and symbols to convey their powerful meanings. This is what our ultimate home will be like. No roiling sea-like chaos. No pain or cancer of depression. No death or wrenching losses. No crime, racism, hunger or poverty. No wars between nations or clashes of cultures. The cultural achievements of all nations will be incorporated. Why so glorious? Because the God of glory will make his home among us and we will enjoy once again that unrestricted intimacy with our loving Creator. We will drink deeply from the river of life and eat freely from the tree of life. The Lamb of God will be our king. And in some fashion we will reign with him. Imagine! Imagine, and long for that day.” (From *Living the Christian Year*, p. 51)

## **A-Apply**

During Advent we wait for Christ’s first and second comings. Remembering the birth of Christ, when done from a worshipful heart, brings extraordinary joy to the Christian. We are reminded of God’s love and tenderness – of God’s overwhelming desire to connect with humans, with us, with me. Likewise, Imagining what the second coming will be like is inspiring. When we are most world-weary, tired, and down-trodden, the thought of the promised return of Christ and restored creation can lift our hearts with hope and renew our vision of the future. What is it that you thirst for? What better time than Advent to bring your heart’s desire to God in prayer. Emmet Fox, in “Your Heart’s Desire” describes it this way: “The most secret, sacred wish that lies deep down at the bottom of your heart, the wonderful thing that you hardly dare to look at, or to think about – the thing that you would rather die than have anyone else know of, because it seems so far beyond anything that you are, or have at the present time, that you fear that you would be cruelly ridiculed if the mere thought of it were known – that is just the very thing that God is wishing you to do or to be for him. And the birth of that marvelous wish in your soul – the dawning of that secret dream – was the Voice of God himself telling you to arise and come up higher because he had need of you.”

Do you trust God so intimately that you are able to share the deepest desires of your heart with him? Could you take that step of faith and trust God to hold, bless, and use your secret, sacred wish for God’s glory?

## **P-Pray**

O God, as I reflect on all that Jesus’ birth and return mean to me, may the Spirit which was in Christ be in me, enabling me to know Your will and empowering me to do Your will. Amen