

Advent 2014 – Fourth Sunday

Dec 21, 2014

Found by Love

Ps 67 & Luke 1:26-33

(159, 136, 153)

Have you ever noticed how much fear
the announcements of Christ's birth created?

The shepherds were afraid, Herod was afraid,
and Mary was afraid – “perplexed” is the word Luke uses.

But the fear doesn't last long.
The angels and agents of God announce that he is coming,
coming in the flesh, full of grace and truth,
coming with great power,
coming to rule the world and rule it with **Love**.

God is fulfilling the promise to come and rule the world with **Love**,
a promise given so often and in so many ways in the prophets.

This power frightens us at first.
It's so strange, and surprising, and shocking.
But when we see it embodied in the Christ child,
when we see it at work in the life and witness of Jesus Christ,
when we are called by it to live our lives as blessings to the world,
we are found by and filled with and guided by
a **Love** that casts out the fear.
That's how John described the love of God
in his first letter – 1 John 4:16-18a:

*God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them.*

*Love has been perfected among us in this:
That we may have boldness on the day of judgment,
because as he is, so are we in this world.
There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.*

Every Christmas, we are found anew by this **Love** that is God,
this **Love** that nourishes us to be everything God wants us to be,

this **Love** that abides deep within us and gives us life itself,
just like it did for Mary that day the angel appeared.

After the angel's love casts out her fear,
she pondered what giving birth to God might mean,
and then went and did it –
carried God to term and gave birth to the King of **Love**.

Can you imagine what life would be like
if you followed the flow of Mary's experience?
You are found by the **Love** of God.
You are filled with the possibilities of that **Love**.
You give birth, in a very real sense, to that **Love**
every time you act with compassion, kindness, and grace,
every time you are a blessing in this world.

That's how God keeps this **Love** that came to us at Christmas alive.
That's how God extends the power of this **Love**.
God dwells in us and fills us with this **Love**
until it overflows into the world.

Too often, we block it.
Too often, we distort it.
Too often, we hoard it and abuse it.
Too often, we fear its power to transform us
into what God calls us to be – citizens of this kingdom of **Love**.

But God's **Love** is not deterred or defeated by our ignorance and refusal.
God continues to invite us to take up our calling
as agents of the divine **Love** that excels all other loves in the world.
God comes to us over and over again, just as he did that first Christmas,
drawing us into a new phase of our lives by the power of his **Love**.

So, the question for you, and for me, on this last Sunday of Advent is this:

*Are you willing to let the power of this **Love**
cast out your fears of being compassionate, kind, and graceful?*

Ponder that, accept God's invitation to live in this **Love**, and flourish.

*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far
more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Eph 3:20-21)*