



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday, December 18, 2011

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The unit you are viewing, Fourth Sunday of Advent, 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 the Fourth Sunday of Advent in the archives of the Lectionary for 2008, 2009, and 2010. 2011 is the first year that the African American Lectionary has posted compact units for moments on its liturgical calendar.

I. Description of the Liturgical Moment

Rodney S. Sadler, Jr., in the 2008 Lectionary Commentary for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, sets an apt description of this moment of the Christian Calendar for us by saying:

As with each of the previous three Advent lectionary readings, the anticipation of the coming of the Lord is growing. Usually, this is felt most as the songs sacred in our

sanctuaries and secular on our radios are increasingly those commemorating Christmas. In the next week, our number of services will likely increase as the requisite Christmas pageants and concerts fill our weekly calendars. Though the holiday is holy for us, our voice on this Sunday is competing with the larger and louder voices of the marketplace telling our congregants that they still have more shopping to do for Christmas Day is fast approaching. The secular world has done all that they can to make this holiday their own, offering competing protagonists (Santa, Rudolph), competing focal themes (gift giving, and gift getting), and competing excitement and enthusiasm. As we come to this, our final Sunday sermon wherein we can pose an alternative vision for this sacred holy season before Christmas arrives, we do so with a greater sense of the need to remind our people that “Jesus (really) is the reason for the season.”

With this material as our backdrop, we provide a sermonic outline for the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

II. Fourth Sunday of Advent: Sermonic Outline

A. Sermon Focus Text(s): Isaiah 60:1-3; Luke 2:29-32 (New Revised Standard Version)

Isaiah 60:1-3

(v. 1) Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
(v. 2) or darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
(v. 3) Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Luke 2:29-32

(v. 29) ‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; (v. 30) for my eyes have seen your salvation, (v. 31) which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, (v. 32) a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’

B. Possible Titles

- i. The True Light of Christmas
- ii. Of Light and Glory
- iii. Getting Up for Christmas

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 the use of the words “light” and “glory” in the Isaiah passage.

In Hebrew, “shine” and “light” are two forms of the same root word, “*lior*.” The word “light” is a symbol of the presence of God. This can be seen in the preceding Chapter as well (Isaiah 59). It is presumed that the presence of God brings with it deliverance and blessings. This is a recurring theme in Old Testament biblical literature. We first encounter it in the Creation Narrative when the Creator’s voice calls forth “light” from the abyss of darkness, i.e., “Let there be light!” Herein, it evokes a clear parallel to that of cosmos being drawn from chaos. Or it is the presence of good overcoming evil in a much more allegorical-metaphorical sense. It is further reinforced in the Exodus Narrative through the presence of the Cloudy Pillar by day and the Pillar of Fire by night. Both of these hyperbolic animations drawn from nature represent the presence of the Divine. We encounter it again as the light that shines over the Ark of the Covenant (or rests upon the ‘Mercy Seat’ between the wings of the cherubim of the Ark). In this last imagery the “Shekinah” is said to be indicative of the “Glory” (Heb., ‘*Kabowd*’) of God.

‘*Lior*’ and ‘*Kabowd*’ are so close in their interests and meaning as to almost overlap in linguistic purpose. However, they are distinctly distinguishable, as exemplified in this text, by the fact that humans may possess the ‘*lior*’ but NEVER the ‘*Kabowd*’ of Yahweh. God’s light is ours to use to understand our purpose and place in creation. But the Glory of God is the exclusive domain of the Divine. God never gives God’s Glory to anyone! “Your ‘*lior*’ has come! And the “*Kabowd*” of the Lord has risen upon you.”

III. Introduction

I remember well the Christmases of my childhood. It seemed as if that long-awaited morning would surely never dawn! In spite of the mandate of my parents for me and my younger brother to hurry off to sleep so that Santa could make his arrival, we often attempted to wait the snow-white bearded portly fellow out. With the assurance that the jolly old elf would definitely not come if little eyes were not fast asleep, we said our good nights, kissed our parents, knelt at our bedside to offer our nighttime prayers, and then reluctantly climbed into bed in anticipation of Christmas morning.

Erstwhile youthful naiveté and rabid and heightened anticipation intertwined with faithful expectation of that joyful momentous morning and made for us the elements of a wonderful Christmas. The smell of the tree, the shimmer of the tinsel, and the sight of the toys all converged in creating the mystical magic of that grand day in the starlit eyes of a child!

In the hinterland of Judea, in the little village of Bethlehem, in the stables behind an inn a child was born. This child was the actualization of a profound promise, the realization of a long-held hope, the Gift of God to humankind. Resting in the sticky straw of a roughhewn stone feeding trough crib was the King of Kings. There lay the Lord of Lords, the majestic Manger Messiah! No Royal Robes or Regal Retinue to adorn and greet him, just swaddling rags and solitary shepherds. But in him was the light of the world, the prophetic fulfillment of the Jews, and the glory of the Gentiles.

Long before that starlit night God had revealed a Divine plan to restore fallen humanity—a plan to once again enthrone the righteous reign of the divinely appointed government to the people of God. Such restoration would be the blessing of the whole inhabited earth and not just the “Chosen of God.” Over and over again the prophets of old declared in a profound way the care, concern, and love of God for God’s people. But it was the declaration in Isaiah 60:1-3 that catches in a significant way a sure glimpse of that which the Song of Simeon, the “Nunc Dimittis,” confirms.

The prayers of the faithful have been answered. The hopes of all who love Jerusalem are now a reality. The prophetic pronouncements have become the blaring trumpeted truth of the Gospel. The dynamic and moving presence of God has ushered in the dawning of a new day! Those who have languished in the deep deplorable environs of depressive darkness can now “Arise and shine for our light (the light of the world) has come!”

IV. Moves/Points

Move/Point One – Life is often filled with darkness.

- a. God is able to draw life out of darkness;
- b. It is natural for the living to seek light; and
- c. God is the source of all light.

Move/Point Two – Light is attractive.

- a. Things and people are naturally attracted to light;
- b. Spiritual light is an even greater attraction than physical light; and
- c. God uses that spiritual light as a guide for us along life’s journey.

Move/Point Three – The darkness of life cannot overshadow the Light of God.

- a. Darkness and light cannot co-exist;
- b. The light and presence of God always prevails over darkness; and
- c. It is the promise of God to always give hope and bring us light for our journey.

V. Celebration

Our King has come! God has made manifest all that God promised through the prophets. God made good on God’s word. It matters not the source and density of our darkness. The

illuminating presence of our King will rise and chase the darkness away. Our King neither falters nor fails, but blesses and prevails!

All who have been trapped in this world's darkness are now released in the light of God's love. It is a love so dear and so deep that it traversed the star-decked staircase of Heaven to bring to this world the joy of our salvation. It came not in the treat-filled trappings of a palace, but in the simplicity of an open stable. It was delivered not with a fanfare and flurry of trumpeters, but in the sweet soulful singing of an angelic host. It is a song that declares that "the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; for He shall reign forever and ever." Not just for a day, not just for an hour, not just for the moment, but he shall reign forever and ever.

How long is forever? I'll tell you how long forever is! It is longer than the perpetual dawning of a brand-new day after the mundane madness of a seemingly unceasing midnight! How long is forever? It is longer than the curse of sin and the apparent triumph of death. How long is forever? It is longer than the languishing laughter of our foes at the folly of our faith! How long is forever? It is long enough for God to remain on Heaven's throne while simultaneously becoming a bouncing baby boy in a barn in the backstretches of Bethlehem. How long is forever? Just long enough for the Savior of the world to stop dying on a cross outside the city gates of Jerusalem to write a passport of admittance to Heaven for a dying thief out on Dead Man's Hill. How long is forever? Just long enough to greet and celebrate with our loved ones in glory who have gone on before us. How long is FOREVER? Long enough to bow with the four and twenty elders around the Great White Throne; long enough for all the citizens of Heaven to stop and sing, "Blessed be the Lamb of God!" Long enough to say, "Thank you, Lord!" Long enough to praise his name!

Yes, George Frideric Handel, you are right! It is forever and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and . . . AMEN!

VI. Illustration(s)

Our Greatest Need

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.

—Source Unknown

See the Sermon Illustrations section of the African American Lectionary for additional illustrations that you may wish to use in presenting a sermon for this moment on the liturgical calendar.

VII. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in These Passages

Isaiah 60:1-3

Sounds: Singing of birds; celebrative voices of crowds of people;

Sights: Morning sunlight; the flight of songbirds; people filling the streets in the dawn of a day;
and

Colors: The bright yellow of sunlight; clear sky blue and white cotton ball-like clouds.

Luke 2:29-32

Sounds: Sounds of sacred Temple songs; cooing and crying of an infant;

Sights: The Interior of the Jewish synagogue; Simeon in Priestly garments; and

Colors: The colors of the sacred garments of the priests, and the gold and ivory in the Temple.

VIII. Songs to Accompany This Sermon

A. Hymns

- Rise, Shine, Give God the Glory. Author Unknown
- Come, Thou Almighty King. By Jimmy Owens. Tune, (HOLY).
- The Birthday of a King. By William Harold Neidlinger

B. Well-known Song(s)

- Wait. By Donald Lawrence
- Hold On. By Clarence Henry Reid, Jr. Seacer, Larry Troutman, Willie Clark, Billy Steele, and Roger Troutman
- Set the Atmosphere. By Kurt Carr

C. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2011)

- They That Wait. By Fred Hammond
- Hold Out. By Hezekiah Walker
- I Never Lost My Praise. By Tramaine Hawkins
- Let It Rise. By Stephen Hurd

D. Spiritual(s)

- I Want to See Him. By Rufus H. Cornelius
- We Must Work. Text and Tune by Keith C. Laws
- The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy. West Indian Carol
- Hail to the Lord's Anointed. By James Montgomery. Tune, (SHEFFIELD).

E. Liturgical Dance Music

- Seasons. By Donald Lawrence
- Because He Lives. By Marvin Winans

F. Invitational Song(s)

- God Is Here. By Karen Clark Sheard
- There He Is. By P.J. Morton
- Jesus, the Light of the World. By Charles Wesley. Tune, (WE'LL WALK IN THE LIGHT), by George Elderkin

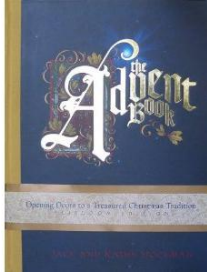
IX. Videos, Audio, and/or Interactive Media

- Video of Advent Preparations at Nu Faith UMC. Online location:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvilUgrVbZQ>

X. Articles and Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons or Bible Studies Related to the Fourth Sunday of Advent

- An article by Fr. Freddy Washington. "Advent: A Season of God's Glory." Online location: <http://www.nbccongress.org/black-catholic-spirituality/advent.asp>
- An article by Safiyah Fosua. "Advent Year A: How Do We Get to Zion?" Online location:
<http://www.gbod.org/site/apps/nlnet/content.aspx?c=nhLRJ2PMKsG&b=5609115&ct=7654855>

Children's Books

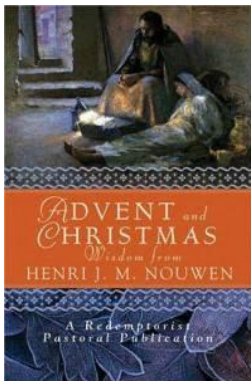


Stockman, Jack and Kathy. The Advent Book: Opening Doors to a Treasured Christmas Tradition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008. Contains 25 pages—one for each day of Advent—that feature a door that actually opens. And behind each door is an appropriate picture and a part of the Christmas story with simple text that even the youngest can understand.

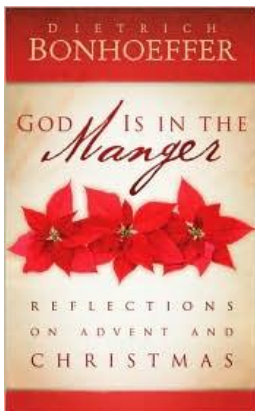


Samuels, Allison, and Michele Wood, Illustrator. Christmas Soul: African American Holiday Stories. New York, NY: Jump at the Sun Publishers, 2001.

Adult Books



Nouwen, Henri J. M. Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J. M. Nouwen: Daily Scripture and Prayers together with Nouwen's Own Words. Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2004.



Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. God Is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2010.

XI. Ideas and Links to Helpful Websites for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

- A resource for Advent supplies. Online location:
<http://www.parablecs.com/categorylist.asp?myMode=2&c=392432:Advent+Supplies&cid=361130&cid1=&c1=Church-Supplies&stc=361130&smc=392431&sbc=392432>
- An online resource of readings for The Fourth Sunday of Advent. Online location:
<http://www.liturgies.net/Advent/readings/readings4.htm>
- An Advent and Christmas Directory. Online location:
<http://www.liturgybytlw.com/AdvXmDir.html>

XII. Notes for Select Songs

A. Hymns

- Rise, Shine, Give God the Glory. Author Unknown
Location:
Walker, Albertina. Albertina Walker's Greatest Hits: Original Gospel Classics. Jackson, MS: Original Gospel/Malaco, 2006.
- Come, Thou Almighty King. By Jimmy Owens. Tune, (HOLY).
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #327
- The Birthday of a King. By William Harold Neidlinger
Location:
Sheet Music Available
E.C. Schirmer Publishing
138 Ipswich Street
Boston, MA 02215-3534
Phone: 617-236-1935

B. Well-Known Song(s)

- Wait. By Donald Lawrence
Location:
Armstrong, Vanessa Bell. Walking Miracle. Brentwood, TN: EMI Gospel, 2007.
- Hold On. By Clarence Henry Reid, Jr. Seacer, Larry Troutman, Willie Clark, Billy Steele, and Roger Troutman
Location:
Sounds of Blackness. Time for Healing. New York, NY: Perspective Records, 1997.
- Set the Atmosphere. By Kurt Carr
Location:

Carr, Kurt and The Kurt Carr Singers. Awesome Wonder. Inglewood, CA: Gospocentric, 2001.

C. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2011)

- They That Wait. By Fred Hammond
Location:
Love Unstoppable. New York, NY: Verity Records, 2009.
- Hold Out. By Hezekiah Walker
Location:
Hezekiah & the Love Fellowship Choir. 20/85 The Experience. New York, NY: Verity Records, 2005.
- I Never Lost My Praise. By Tramaine Hawkins
Location:
I Never Lost My Praise. Inglewood, CA. Label: Gospocentric, 2007.
- Let It Rise. By Stephen Hurd
Location:
Murphy, William, III. All Day: The William Murphy Project. New York, NY: Sony, 2005.

D. Spiritual(s)

- I Want to See Him. By Rufus H. Cornelius
Location:
Zion Still Sings for Every Generation. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007. #137
- We Must Work. Text and Tune by Keith C. Laws
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #557
- The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy. West Indian Carol
Location:
Zion Still Sings. #60
- Hail to the Lord's Anointed. By James Montgomery. Tune, (SHEFFIELD).
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #187

E. Liturgical Dance Music

- Seasons. By Donald Lawrence
Location:

Lawrence, Donald & The Tri-City Singers. Go Get Your Life Back. Brentwood, TN: EMI Gospel, 2002.

- Because He Lives. By Marvin Winans
Location:
Winans, Vickie. Live in Detroit. Nashville, TN: Light Records, 1997.

F. Invitational Song(s)

- God Is Here. By Karen Clark Sheard
Location:
The Heavens Are Telling. New York, NY: Elektra Records, 2003.
- There He Is. By P.J. Morton
Location:
Trin-I-Tee 5:7. Holla: The Best of Trin-I-Tee 5:7. Inglewood, CA: Gospocentric, 2007.
- Jesus, the Light of the World. By Charles Wesley. Tune, (WE'LL WALK IN THE LIGHT), by George Elderkin
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #217