



The 4th Sunday of Advent – Being Present with Love

Prelude

Canon in D, piano duet, Martha Main and Judy Prosch

Gathering— The faith narrative is careful to show us a lineage from King David to Jesus. It is no ordinary lineage; it is one that began in the shepherding of sheep, of leading and delivering the people in search of a home. Mary’s womb becomes part of that lineage of love, offering the world the gift of God’s presence “in the flesh.” As we enter the story of the birth of Love Among Us, we are invited to be present with love. We may think the perfect gift is outside our reach to give, but in reality we have all that we need... the heart’s love and presence.

Advent Wreath

Michelle Van Dyke

Chorus:

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.*

Reader: We unwrap a present on this last Sunday of Advent
with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.
Let us open our hearts as we open the gift!

Reader: The promise of Love is the Divine Gift we receive.
So, what will we do with it?

Reader: The gift of love is the essence of the birth of Christ.
The Holy One wanted to be so present to us that God’s Spirit became flesh
in order to inhabit the gifts of touching, healing, comforting, and challenging.

Love is the clarion call to us as Jesus’ disciples.
The more love we put into the world, the better the world will be.
We light this Candle of Love as a sign that we will be
Present with Love in the world.

Reader: As we welcome the light, join us in singing our Advent chorus:

Chorus:

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.*

Prayer of Presence

Reader: Holy Living Light of God,
you are our Loving Presence.
Let this love grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Love to others.
Unwrap and open our hearts.
May it be so.
Amen.

Gathering Song

Angels We Have Heard on High, 188

WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: Martha Main and Paul Frische-Mouri

Special Music

Birthday of a King, Kari Hon and Matthew Main

A Time of Prayer—In this prayerful, present moment, we train our attention on those who are in distress. We pray this week for...*[continue with the prayer concerns of your community and the world]*. In this prayerful, present moment, we train our attention on thanksgiving and joy. We give thanks this week for...*[continue with the prayers of gratitude of your community and the world]*. In this prayerful, present moment we ask you, Christ Jesus, the Greatest Gift of All, to help us savor our journey toward the celebration of Christmas. Help us recognize and create moments of sweet presence rather than filling the voids with the things that do not last. Help us to stop, notice what we are experiencing, and accept it with open hearts and minds. In doing this, we allow you to meet us in the right here, right now, right where we are...

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Special Music

How Many Kings, Kari Hon

We Hear God's Word

And so it is that the Child of Love comes from the most humble of families, though we are sure to be informed by the gospel writer that Joseph was from the lineage of David. While David had built a house for God in his time, Mary's womb became a house of the holy in hers. She accepts the role she is given... to be Present with Love growing inside of her.

Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)

Vivian Thomas

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' ³⁴Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' ³⁵The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.' ³⁸Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

CAROL SING

Carol (first and last verses)

The First Noel, 229 (Bell Choir)

Away in a Manger, 203

Mary, Did You Know, 192 (all)

What Child Is This, 184 (Bell Choir)

Silent Night, 186 (all)

O Little Town of Bethlehem, 180

Joy to the World, 179

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation—Let us bring forth our gifts this day—gifts of our resources, our time, our talent, our very lives—that through this ministry to which Christ has called us God’s presence in this world might be made known.

December Benevolence—The Christmas Fund

Doxology

We Give Thanks—God of love, bless these gifts that we bring before you this day. Use these gifts that your love might be made known in this world through this ministry to which you have called us. Help us to be present in our community as we live out the mission you have given us. With gratitude we lift up these gifts to you. Amen.

Hymn

Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child, 219

Benediction

“Every day we seek to discern how to live faithfully as we surf the Internet choosing which sites get our attention, as we choose news sources that will shape our worldview, as we buy groceries and steward our resources. We are always making choices about how we love the world that God so loves, how our attention, our presence, participates in the mission of God — abundant life for all.”

[adapted from Amy Oden, Right Here, Right Now]

So now go and be truly present so you may be a gift of presence for others.

That’s all that is expected — that the gift that is YOU
is the best gift you can give.

In the name of the Holy Presence, the Divine Gift,
and the Spirit of Love that is just waiting for us
to unwrap abundant life. Amen.

Postlude

In Dulci Jubilo, piano duet, Martha Main and Judy Prosch