



Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 23, 2012

LOVE

Today we relight the first three candles of the Advent Wreath—the candles of HOPE, PEACE and JOY. Now we light the fourth candle. This is the candle of LOVE. Jesus demonstrated self-giving love in his life of healing, teaching and serving. The Christmas season, then, would rightly be a time for kindness,

thinking of others, and sharing with others—especially those who can't repay our kindnesses. It's a celebration of a God who loved us when we had nothing to offer, by giving us his most precious gift. As God is love, let us be love also.

In the Book of Deuteronomy we find these words:

"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Deuteronomy 10:17-19a

From the Gospel of John we hear:

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34-35

Let's pray together:

Dear God,
As our Advent journey is coming to an end,
Grant us the courage to BE your love in action.
Love—even when it hits an unexpected challenge,
Love—when a person is vulnerable and has nothing to offer me back.
Love and show grace the way You love us.
Amen.

Family Questions:

Love is **patient**, love is **kind**. It does **not envy**, it does **not boast**, it is **not proud**. It does **not dishonor others**, it is **not self-seeking**, it is **not easily angered**, it keeps **no record of wrongs**. Love does **not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth**. It always **protects**, always **trusts**, always **hopes**, always **perseveres**. Love never fails.

1. Read this passage together and discuss each of the qualities of love. Try to pick a person you know who lives out that quality with other people. For example: "Love is patient"...what does it mean to be patient? Who is the most patient person you know?"

For Adults:

1. The pace of the Christmas holidays can sometimes make it difficult to be people of love. What about Christmas might cause you to be less like the passage above? What could you do to create space for God to help you be more of a "person of love" this season and in 2013?
2. Take some time in quietness with the passage above. Read it through a few times. Then read it very slowly and stop on each of the qualities and listen quietly in your soul. Is there one part that really stands out? Read the passage again and substitute the word "God" for love. Think about what this means in terms of how God sees you and loves you.



Where the rubber meets the road...

Is there a face that comes to your mind when you think of someone who is difficult to love? What are some tangible ways that you might approach this person in a different way this season to love the way that God loves you?