

Surprised by Love

Սիրոյ Անակնկալը

Advent 4

Matthew 1:18-25

Finally we arrive to the fourth Sunday, when the candle of love is lit.

Badveli Kevin recommended to read a book by Sinclair Ferguson called “**Love Came Down at Christmas.**” Group of us reading this book. I recommend it for anyone to get and read it even during the year. It does not need to be during Advent.

Paul summarizes in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 saying “**Faith, Hope, and love, and the greatest of all is love.**”

What kind of Love is this, that can come down to us, so we can go love God and have fellowship with HIM. Love that save us from death, and give us eternal life...

Because God loved us, we have hope, joy, peace, and faith in HIM.

In this season of Advent, I have been reading the stories of Christmas in Luke and Matthew. We have been touched by characters like Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary the mother of Jesus. Rarely people talk about a character called **Joseph**, the man who raised Jesus, the man who became the earthly father of Jesus.

In any nativity scene, Joseph stands silently near the manger. He is not even given a single line to speak!

-Zechariah spoke too much and he was silenced. If you notice, neither Matthew nor Luke recorded Joseph speaking a word.

-Joseph doesn't even get a line. (To play Joseph in a nativity scene would be easy). So what does Joseph do?

He acts. **He practically demonstrates love.** He does things that make me think about his love and obedience towards God as well as his love and respect towards Mary.

1. He is in the genealogy of Jesus. If you read Luke chapter one, you will find all these names from Abraham all the way to Joseph. God had a plan. The covenant of God with Abraham is being fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Joseph is part of this plan.

What similarities can we see between Abraham and Joseph? Both obeyed God. Both loved God and learned to obey.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (John 14:15a)

Last week I said there is connection between obedience to God and JOY. There is a connection between obedience to God and love towards Him. We love Him, and that is why we obey Him. **Obedience comes out of love and adoration.**

2. God entrusted Joseph a great task to protect Mary, his fiancé, (then his wife) the mother of Jesus. Joseph was the man to whom God entrusted the great task of protecting the mother and her child Jesus from the time Mary conceived Jesus to the life-threatening early years of his life.

This is Joseph of Nazareth, the man of less words, more action. He is there doing his job as the father of the house. We see that in many places.

3. Joseph was a man of justice and mercy. Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit. According to Jewish law, Joseph could have taken Mary for stoning. She was pregnant and not by him. At that time Joseph was not aware of what was happening. We read:

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. (Matthew 1:18-19 ESV)

We don't see Joseph saying too many words. He acts. He had respect and mercy towards Mary. He just wanted to send her home without making a major fiasco.

4. The Angel speaks (God Speaks), he listens.

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:20 ESV)

He listens and acts:

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:24-25 ESV)

When Herod decided to kill the babies:

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” (Matthew 2:13 ESV)

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. (Matthew 2:14-15 ESV)

Joseph took his family all the way to Egypt, to protect them from danger.

When it comes to Love... ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS!

Joseph loved and obeyed God, and we find this manifested in his life and his love towards his family.

But what I like to end this sermon is about God’s love expressed in Christ.

1 Corinthians 13 is well known passage about love. But we are mistaken if say it all about love. It is about author, the source of love who is Jesus himself.

All the descriptions about love can be read like this:

Jesus is kind, Jesus is patient, Jesus does not envy, does not boast, Jesus is not arrogant....and so on.

This book that I read introduced me those qualities all pointing to Jesus.

Let me introduce some of them:

Love is not and does not:

does not envy սէրը չի նախանձիր

“Envy crucified Jesus. It is a lethal poison.” (43)

The basic meaning of the Greek verb “to love” (*agapao*) was “to be happy with your lot.”.....

Jesus is the great example, isn't he? No trace of jealousy in him. Why was that?

Why is there no sense with Jesus that he felt or thought or said, “I deserve better”? (45-46)

He humbled himself, he emptied himself, he became like a servant... because he loved us. He gave up from His glory. What a beautiful way to express love.

The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords does not care about position. Humbles himself.

does not boast սէրը չի գոռոզանար

Pride? What pride? Who can be proud after seeing what Jesus did for you and me. What pride?

“The Father who gave his Son *to us* in the incarnation also gave him *for us* at Calvary.” That is how God proves his love for us--when we were weak and helpless, sinners and enemies, he gave his Son to die for us. This mystery is the wonder of the crucifixion.”

There is no room for boasting, except in this: *Love came down at Christmas.* (52)

is not arrogant չի հպարտանար

“God measure us by how much we grow in grace, not by the position we occupy because of our gifts.” (57)

is not rude Անվայել վարմունք չունենար

does not insist on its own way իրենը չի փնտռեր

“The incarnation of the Son of God was a radical event. And the gospel is a radical message. Jesus said that the discovery of self always involves losing or denying self (Luke 9:24)

And what does denying ourselves look like?

Often, it looks like not listening on our own way when we could, and instead laying down our preferences for the sake of others. (70)

“Christ became what he was not in order that we might become what we were not.” (70)

C.S. Lewis says: **“The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God.”**

is not irritable բարկութեան չի գրգռուիր

“Only when we have yielded to the sovereign will of God, knowing that he will work everything together for our good, do we learn a healthy spiritual detachment from the irritations of life.” (76)

is not resentful չարութիւն չի խորհիր,

“Love does not calculate, make a tally of, or reckon up grudges. Resentment always does. It creates an entire bank account of them. It waits for the right

opportunity. Then it acts. In particular it cannot remain inactive in the presence of generous love.” (81)

does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth

Անհրաւորեան վրայ չի խնդար. հապա ճշմարտութեան խնդակից կըլլայ

“Christian love moves in a very different direction. It does not rejoice in sin and its consequences but in God and his grace--in beauty, in goodness, and in truth (Philippians 4:8).”

Why is rejoicing with the truth and not in wrongdoing so important?

“Because, one way or another, we tend to become like whatever we rejoice in. And that cannot remain hidden.” (86,87)

“The one who was cradled in the Manger is the Truth. He said to himself (John 14:6). John saw it: “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:4). And when we rejoice with the Truth, then we begin to rejoice in everything that is true. Only then are we set free from loving and rejoicing in wrongdoing.” (89)

Love is or does:

patient: ⁴Սէրը երկայնամիտ է

“Love is always patient, always longsuffering. It can be patient in difficult situations because it knows God has a plan. it can be patient with difficult people because it knows they are God's image.” (Genesis 1:26) (p34)

kind: քաղցր է.

“Jesus was kind to the poor and the needy but also to the rich and unsatisfied.” (p40)

bears all things Ամէն բանի կը զիջանի,

The word bear in Greek means “to cover” or “to pass over in silence.” But in its noun form it means a **roof**...

So, love is like a roof: it prevents leaks; it copes with all weathers; it covers things up--including a “multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8) (91)

Because he loved you, he chose to bear the cross and its shame in your place...

Why? To use the picture language or Paul’s vocabulary here, the answer is: to put a roof over our heads--to give us a covering to protect us from the judgment of God and our sins, so that in Christ we might have a hidden place.” (93)

We all need that hiding place. The baby in the Manger would one day provide it. That is why *Love came down at Christmas*. (95)

believes all things (love trusts) ամէն բանի կը հաւատայ,
“Love always seeks to believe the best about people.” Love has no natural appetite either to hear (or to tell others) the worst about people. It isn't that love lacks discernment. After all, Jesus told us not to throw pearls to pigs (Matthew 7:6). But a loving disposition generously assumes the best of people, instead of leaping to negative conclusions about their actions or motives.” (98)

hopes all things ամէն բանի կը յուսայ,
endures all things ամէն բանի կը համբերէ:
The Son of God knew God's plan for our salvation before he ever undertook his mission. He entered the darkness of Mary's womb knowing full well that it would lead to the deeper darkness of the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary. But because ‘Love.... Endures all’, he kept going.” (113)

never ends ⁸ Մէրը բնա՛ւ չիյնար
So here is practical way of looking at these verses:
Remember a difficult situation or a person you have trouble loving. What qualities of love do you need? What unloving qualities you need to avoid?
Go and be surprised by God’s love. His love can touch you through Jesus Christ. And that love can touch others. Therefore, go and surprise someone by God’s love.
Amen

A Hymn of Adoption Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:3-14, Romans 8:14-17; 23-26, Hebrews 2:11 1.

The time of fullness marked the day,
When God sent forth His Son.
Of woman born, and under law,
Redemption’s time had come,
Reversing that old curse for us, Adopting us in love,
The blessing of the Trinity, Free Grace, from heav’n above.

2. Joint-heirs with Christ, and Spirit-led
We praise the Trinity
For “Abba, Father!” now we cry
We’re in God’s family
And Jesus calls us “brothers” now

Our fears are put away.
The Spirit of Adoption's help
Will guide us in the way.

3. Predestined blessings, we enjoy,
According to His will,
Adopted sons, because
His work, His promises fulfill
We stand before Him now in love,
As holy, without blame,
Accepted in God's own Beloved
Forever in His Name .

4. We've heard the Gospel Word of Truth,
Believing by His Grace:
In His own precious promises,
For our accursed race.
The Promised Spirit seals us now
For greater blessings still
God gives us an inheritance
The Living Father's will .

5. The mystery of His good will:
To gather all in Christ,
For in the fullness of the times
He paid redemption's price
As blood -bought sons, we now enjoy
Forgiveness of our sins,
Adoption, and inheritance,
Which Christ's great work begins .

6. Adopted sons, we groan within.
God's Spirit will abide.
Our bodies will soon be redeemed
They will be glorified
We wait with hope and patience still;
The Spirit helps us pray,
By helping in our weaknesses,
And guiding us today.

7. The Father calls us children now
Behold! Amazing Love
Beloved children now we are
His But we will be like Christ because
We'll see Him as He is –

Gordon A. Dickson, Dec. 20, 2012 Tunes: I Sing the Mighty Power of God The Son of God Goes Forth to War It Came Upon a Midnight Clear <https://www.cbfindlay.org/a-hymn-of-adoptio>

GOD
the greatest Lover
SO LOVED
the greatest degree
THE WORLD
the greatest number
THAT HE GAVE
the greatest act
HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON
the greatest Gift
THAT WHOSOEVER
the greatest invitation
BELIEVETH the greatest simplicity
IN HIM the greatest Person
SHOULD NOT PERISH the greatest deliverance
BUT the greatest difference
HAVE the greatest certainty
EVERLASTING LIFE the greatest possession
(author unknown based on John 3:16)

Into This World--An Advent Prayer

Into this world frazzled by haste
bring us STILLNESS.
We will be still in you.

Into this world disgraced by greed
bring us GRACE.
We will move gracefully too.

Into this world plagued with indifference
bring us COMPASSION.
We will embody compassion as have you.

Into this world jaded and bored
bring us WONDER.
We will wonder as we wander with you.

Into this world gone mad with violence
bring us PEACE.
We will make peace through you.

Into this world gone dark with despair
bring us HOPE.
We will be hopeful too.

Into this world of suffering and sorrow
bring us your JUICE and JOY.
We will be joyful in you.

Into this world turned cynical and callous
bring us your extravagant LOVE.
We will incarnate love as have you.

Into this world, come.

~ Dan Miller. © 2021