

Meditation for the Fourth Evensong of Advent

'The greatest of these is love.'

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There are three heavenly virtues: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love.

We often talk of faith, yet we speak of it as some kind of superstition, a quiet knowledge we think we have even though others do not have it. It is an embarrassment to us, even though it is trust in the one true God. We may be ashamed of Him, but *He is not ashamed of us*.

We speak of hope, a virtue we do not often well understand, for we are not sure what we hope for. Yet we hope for the promise given by the same God that we have faith in, that we have trust in; the God we are accused of having a superstition in; a superstition that shall *judge the living and the dead*.

But there is love. The greatest of all virtues, the virtue that everyone praises, and that no one attempts.

'Love is patient, love is kind.' Things we all lack. *'It never insists on its own way.'* Who, to be honest, can claim that they do this? Few are patient, and fewer are kind. We rejoice in back-biting, in gossip. And rarely do we praise the one who says nothing, because to say nothing would protect the weak.

'It is not irritable or resentful.' And yet all of us are. We are all liars if we believe we do not resent many things about the people around us, whether they are things current, or they are things past.

'Love does not envy or boast.' But what is life without taking a little pride in one's work, in believing truly that one is really decent at one does, and to remind someone of it on occasion. Perhaps on many occasions.

We know nothing of love. For *God is love*, and we know nothing of Him.

But a child is born in Bethlehem. [The ruler of all].

He says nothing, but a child's babble, for though it is His right to accuse the world, He has not come to condemn it, but to save it.

He says nothing, but a child's babble, for though it is His right to damn the world, He has not come to cast it away, but to bring it to Himself.

He says nothing, but a child's babble, for though He is God, yet *he has not counted himself equal to God*. Rather, He was *made man*, man just like us, born of a peasant, born of woman. He *does not boast*. How could He? He is one with us, and what do we have to boast of?

So the Christ child babbles, even as every child babbles. Not because there is nothing to said, but because there is nothing to be said, to you, or to me, beyond the Law and Prophets, those who spoke long ago saying, '*Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind, and love thy neighbor as thyself.*'

Yet none of us keep this simple command, to love God, to love our neighbor. None of us, *no not one*. To be honest, most of us live in annoyance, resentment, unforgiveness, anger, even hatred.

But the Christ child does not look up from His mother's arms in judgment toward us, in our feeble cowardice.

The Christ child merely babbles, the thing we in this life can never know, and His infinite life has always known, *that love never ends*.

We are all weak, impatient, immoral, unforgiving, hateful, bitter, angry. But God is made flesh, in a son born of Mary. And He is love. [*And we have seen Him, full of grace and truth*]. He shall *bear all things*.

What we cannot do, He shall do. He shall *save His people from their sin*.

Holy Mary asks, '*Shall I give up my firstborn for my transgression? The fruit of my body for sin of my soul?*' It is a fair question, for who shall atone for the petty wickedness of our selfish, daily lives? Who would care to save us from our useless quibbles that we grow into great offenses? Who will make our waking death into

life?

A sacrifice is needed, for *life is in the blood*.

The Christ child now merely babbles. But his babbling will become not merely words but works.

And the works shall speak one truth.

'Love never ends.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Micah 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 13.