

Advent 4 – LOVE

A talk by Anne Lindsay

As we prepare for Christmas we light the fourth candle of the Advent wreath: it represents Love.

At Christmas we think about God's love for us. The arrival of the baby Jesus is a magnificent symbol of love. Love for a new born baby is unconditional.

We light the fourth candle acknowledging love as fundamental to our understanding of Christmas.

The candle is lit.

God loves us and asks us to love each other.

We give thanks for the gift of love at Christmas. Let us share that gift abundantly.

One of the memorable moments of 2018 was the sermon of Bishop Michael Curry at the Wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. I love weddings because they celebrate love and remind us of how fundamental love is to being human. I will not speak for as long as Bishop Curry or be quite as enthusiastic, but I am inspired today by his sermon on love.

He began by quoting the Song of Solomon:

“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.”

He went on to quote from Dr Martin Luther King Jr:

“We must discover the power of love, the redemptive power of love. And when we do that, we will make of this old world a new world, for love is the only way.”

Bishop Curry encouraged the congregation to think about when they first fell in love in order to recall the experience of the power of love. I encourage you to think about when a new baby has been born in your family or in your friendship circle. Baby Aria, for example, lights up the room whenever she is present. Our response is a very pure form of love. Christmas encourages us to think about that type of love. It is unconditional.

The message of Jesus is very simple and direct. In Mark's Gospel he says the first commandment is:

³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.^[a] ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’^[b] There is no commandment greater than these.”

These commandments are sometimes referred to as the Law of Love. My understanding of the Law of Love is this:

God is Love.

Make Love the most important cause and effect in your life.

Use all your ways of being and all your will power to choose Love.

Know that God loves you.

As God loves you, love yourself.

Accept yourself as the creation that you are meant to be.

Love others.

Just as you accept yourself, accept others.

Have compassion for yourself and have compassion for others.

So what else do we know about Love? 1 Corinthians 13. 4-8

4.Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5.**It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6.**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7.**It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. **8.**Love never fails.

Bishop Curry asked the wedding congregation to imagine a world where 'love is the way'.

This Christmas let's live each moment choosing love as the our value and our purpose.