

## Gospel-Centered Advent Reading Week 4: The Love Candle

The big story of the Bible is all about the one true God who chooses to love unloveable people. After Moses brought the people of Israel safely out of slavery in Egypt they came to a mountain called Sinai where God made a special covenant promise to love and care for them. Yet even as God was making this promise they made a golden calf to love and worship. God would have destroyed the people in that moment if Moses had not cried out for mercy (Exod 32:1-35). God did more than relent, he came down in a cloud and renewed his special covenant promise (Exod 34:5).

**Exodus 34:6-7a** (NIV) And [the LORD God] passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished...”

Across the Old Testament in the books of Numbers, Psalms, Jeremiah, Jonah, Nehemiah, and Joel this passage becomes a rallying cry for the people to repent when they sin, receive forgiveness, and experience God’s love anew.<sup>1</sup> We do not find a quotation of these verses in the New Testament, but we do find the heart of it in the gospel of John.

**John 1:14** (NIV) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

God’s glory came down at Sinai shrouded by a cloud but at the birth of Jesus God’s glory came down shrouded in the human form. At Sinai God dwelt in a tent called a tabernacle and in John’s gospel God “made his dwelling among us.” In the Greek this literally means God “tabernacled” among us. God dwelt among us in the person of Jesus. God came to the Israelites full of grace and love so Jesus in John’s gospel comes to us full of “grace and truth.”

This leaves us with a question. Aren’t we all guilty in our sin? So then how can God both love and punish the guilty? The answer is that God can give us love and satisfy his justice by taking the punishment we deserve upon himself. Jesus, God made flesh, pays for our sins with his own life so that we might live. Therefore, the cross is where justice and love meet.

***Now as we light the candle of love*** we thank God for who he is. We praise him for his compassionate, gracious, and loving character and that he came to rescue us from our sins and grant us eternal life. We thank God for loving us enough to take our punishment upon himself at the cross. At Christmas, we thank God that when he came to this world he didn’t come shrouded by a cloud but fully revealed in a small baby boy named Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8, 17; Jeremiah 32:18; Jonah 4:2; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13

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*Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote this gospel-centered advent reading to tell the big-story story of the Bible. Please feel free to use it in your church to share the gospel. Find more advent readings at [CornerstoneWestford.com](http://CornerstoneWestford.com).*