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Advent I Am

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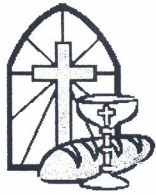
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Advent I Am

LEE MAGNESS

This Christmas reading connects the advent of Jesus with the identity of Jesus.

L = leader or liturgist, the reader of the scripture texts; R = reader, the reader of the poetic reflection;

C = the chorus of readers or congregation.

- L *Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. (Luke 2:4)*
- R Joseph went to Judea
The place of power
Lair of kings and conquerors
Site of tower and temple
The carpenter had come to a place
Of procurators and priests when he
- L *went from the town of Nazareth ... to Judea*
- R Joseph and Mary murmured in amazement
and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah***
- L *Joseph ... went from the town of Nazareth to Judea ... to the city of David called Bethlehem*
- R Bethlehem slept in Jerusalem's shadow
A town of dusty streets and stalls
A town of dozing sheep and shepherds
Far from privilege and power
The peasants had come to a village of peasants
But a king had once called it home, this
- L *city of David called Bethlehem*
- R The little village wondered at the woman great with child
and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***Can this be the son of David?***
- L *He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. (Luke 2:5)*
- R They went and a long going it was
Laborious and long
Full of false starts and frequent stops
Longer for her than for him
Few knew the pain of each plodding step
The fellow pilgrims could only pity when
- L *he went ... with Mary*
- R The heart of the bouncing baby beat strong
and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***I am the way***
- L *He went...with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child*
- R Engaged and expecting

- Betrothed and pregnant
 Unmarried and with child
 There was no good way to say it
 Would the shame have outweighed the son?
 No, nothing could have countered the fact that she
- L *was expecting a child*
- R The baby borne in shame would have answered the whispers
 and it would have sounded for all the world like
- C ***I am the son of God***
- L *While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. (Luke 2:6)*
- R Micah had mentioned it
 This while-they-were-there there
 this not-the-least Bethlehem
 Where place and time converged
 It was time for God to send a son
 Through a real person, in a real place, s
- L *while they were there, the time came*
- R If the people of this place and time had noticed
 they would have known that
- C ***the fullness of time had come***
- L *And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because
 there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)*
- R It was a first birth and long
 It was a first birth and hard
 One to be sweated through,
 Strained through, screamed through
 There was no mother or midwife
 Her husband was no help when
- L *she gave birth to her first-born son*
- R The child could only cry long and hard
 and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***I am the firstborn of all creation, the firstborn from the dead***
- L *She gave birth to her first-born son...and laid him in a manger*
- R It would at least be warm
 It would at least be dry
 It would be somewhat safe
 There where animals ate
 Her husband might have complained
 The innkeeper could have cared less that
- L *she laid him in a manger*
- R But the child could only coo safe and warm
 and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***I am the bread of life***
- L *In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. (Luke 2:8)*
- R They were used to the far fields
 They were used to starry nights
 They were used to the half sleep

- They were used to the sheep
 But angels were a different matter
 And news of a Savior settled strangely on the
- L *shepherds living in the fields*
- R The child could only cry far into the starry night
 and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***I am the good shepherd***
- L *There were shepherds living in the fields ... keeping watch over their flocks by night*
- R The sheep had been silent to the night
 To the glory, the shining, the angels
 They were oblivious to the event
 To the fear and joy, the coming and going
 They would be silent before their shearers
 As they were with their shepherds no longer
- L *keeping watch over their flocks by night*
- R So the lonely sheep could only bleat
 and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***Behold the lamb of God***
- L *And an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*
 (Luke 2:9)
- R Even the dimmest star glimmers bright
 On a late pasture land night
 Even the days had been dark lately
 But now God-glory glowed
 The farmers were flooded out
 And filled with angel awe when
- L *the glory of the Lord shone around them*
- R The just-born baby gurgled his barn bed
 and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***I am the light of the world***
- L *So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.* (Luke 2:16)
- R The stall was still there
 When they eventually arrived
 The manger was there and the mother
 And the for-all-intents-and-purposes father
 But the object of the information
 The thing found though never lost was
- L *the child lying in the manger*
- R The child sighed at their wild wonder
 and it sounded for all the world like
- C ***I am***
- L *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*
 (Luke 2:20)
- R It had been a time for telling
 A night for exclamation, for proclamation
 They had seen what they had been told
 Now they told what they had seen
 It was a night for news

- For telling God praise and others
 L *all they had heard and seen*
 R The child chuckled at the suddenly talkative shepherds
 and it sounded for all the world like
 C ***I am the truth***
- L *In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem.... (Matt 2:1)*
 R Ruled by Rome, he ruled for Rome,
 He married Mariamne, daughter of Judah
 He gave them fortresses, aqueducts, a Temple
 He gave them fear, made them what he was—paranoid
 It was a time of terror and turmoil
 It was an age of oppression when he was born
 L *in the time of King Herod*
 R The bent-back peasants padded past the house and muttered
 and it sounded for all the world like
 C ***Are you the King of the Jews?***
- L *In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking,
 Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising. (Matt 2:1-2)*
 R They studied the stars
 They studied the scriptures
 They knew the nations
 And heard history happening
 Judah was on the rise
 Those wise men from the edge of dawn
 L *observed his star at its rising*
 R The baby babbled at their starry eyes
 and it sounded for all the world like
 C ***I am the bright and morning star***
- L *When they had heard the king, they set out; and there ahead of them went the star that they had seen at its rising,
 until it stopped over the place where the child was ... On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his
 mother; and they knelt down and worshipped him. (Matt 2:9, 11a)*
 R Micah had mentioned the Messiah
 But Bethlehem? Bethlehem?
 Where the scriptures sent they went
 Where the star stopped they stopped
 The sages were stunned to silence
 There in that humble house
 L *and they knelt and worshipped him*
 R But the cosmos careened around them
 and it sounded for all the world like
 C ***Jesus is Lord***
- L *Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matt 2:11b)*
 R They had reached their goal
 They had received their gift
 The gift of the journey's end
 The delight of destination
 But they broke their reverie long enough

- To remember the well-packed presents—
- L *they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, myrrh*
- R The gold twinkled in his eyes and tinkled in his fingers
and it sounded for all the world like
- C *you were ransomed not with perishable things like silver and gold*
- L *When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was furious, and he sent and killed all the children
in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under.... (Matt 2:16)*
- R While the soldiers slaughtered the infant sons
Joseph shouldered his infant son
And they edged toward Egypt
The magi had made it home
But the brilliance was gone from Bethlehem
Only swords flashed now as they
- L *killed all the children in and around Bethlehem*
- R The child looked back with longing and lamented
and it sounded for all the world like
- C *the Son of man must be killed*
- R He came amidst questions
- C *Are you the King of the Jews?
Can this be the son of David?*
- R He asserted his identity
- C *I am
I am the way
I am the truth
I am the life
I am the light of the world
I am the bright and morning star
I am the bread of life
I am the good shepherd
I am the son of God
I am the firstborn of all creation, the firstborn from the dead
I am*
- R They foresaw his fate
- C *The fullness of time had come
Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah
Behold the lamb of God
The Son of man must be killed
You were ransomed not with perishable things like silver and gold*
- R We confess his coming
- C *Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord*

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