

## **Devotion for Week of November 27, 2022**

### **Rev. Jeanne Simpson**

I hope you have been able to pick up the Advent Devotions booklet in the narthex. It is “The Fullness of Time,” inspired by Henri Nouwen, one of the most influential theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A Dutch Catholic priest, he taught at the University of Notre Dame, Yale Divinity School and Harvard Divinity School, and he wrote 36 books.

Nouwen struggled with loneliness and depression, and one of his major ongoing themes involved his struggle reconciling his depression with his Christian faith. In Return of the Prodigal Son, he described love and forgiveness as unconditional. In the book, he invites the reader to follow him in his personal return to the spiritual foundations of the Christian faith as he meditates on all the characters of the parable.

In the first devotion for advent, he is quoted as saying, “We must listen with our whole being, trusting that the Word that created us will also heal us. God wants to become present to us and thus radically transform our fearful hearts.” The Biblical text is Ephesians 1:9-10: “...he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

What strikes me in both these texts is the acknowledgement that God yearns for us – God wants to become present in us and transform our “fearful hearts.” God wants to gather up all things in him. When we are lonely or sad, we can remember that. God is there, waiting to accept us with open arms. God hears our pain and reaches out to us when we need comfort. We need not be fearful. God wants to draw us near. And God sent his Son to show us what that comfort and love looks like. So as we wait for the coming of the Son, we can remember that we are always embraced within the folds of God’s loving care.

*Jeanne*