Interrupted By Hope
ADVENT AS BREAKING THE CIRCLE
(Wm. Paul Young “Coming to Find Us” video)

God entering into our lives means that God is opening the circle of God’s love to embrace us right where we are. Novelist, Wm. Paul Young talks about how God breaks out of the circle of relationship between the persons of the Trinity in order to include us. If this is a sacrifice God is willing to make, then what might this mean for us?

Questions for Reflection

1. Young begins by describing the Advent season: “My picture of the Advent season is a circle of three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, working out the details of coming to find us in our lost-ness. And they break the circle and invite a fourteen year old into it and they submit to her.”

   What does it mean for God to “break the circle” and then include us into the circle?

   Why is it significant that the Advent story includes this fourteen-year-old girl?

   How does God “submit” to us in trying to find us?

2. Young describes another picture of God’s submission, Jesus on his knees and washing the feet of his disciples. He paraphrases Jesus saying, “You know, I don’t do anything unless I see the Father do it” (John 5:19).

3. Young then asks the question, “Who touches the leper?” and “Who plays with the children?” These questions can be answered with both “Jesus” and “the Father.”

   What does it mean to know that Jesus’ actions are guided by modeling the Father’s actions?

   What does this say about what God wants to do in the world?

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1 “Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father (that one) does, the Son does likewise.’” (NRSV)
How might this also be a model for us?

4. Young discusses what is not part of God reaching out into the world, ideas such as impatience and unkindness. How is the “fruit of the Spirit” related to God seeking the lost in the world?

5. In discussing God’s wrath, Young says, “Wrath is a good thing if it is restorative, but we were taught that it is retributive and punitive. It is just because [God’s] righteousness was “indignant” and now he is upset.” A view of retributive wrath sees God as needing to humans to return to God what humans took away from God because of sin. It is God demanding justice and wanting therefore to punish humanity.

How has this been the primary narrative for many Evangelical Christians? How is this view different from the view that God wants restoration?

6. Young continues by saying, “This is about a God because of love will come to you, as a mother who wants to rescue a child. That is ‘wrath.’” He uses the image of a mother coming to save a child from being stung by hornets. The child confuses the mother coming to rescue the child for anger, yet it is about saving the child.

How do we often mistake God’s love for God’s anger and punishment?

7. Young cites C.S. Lewis and George McDonald saying, “Punishment changes nothing. It is not about this legal model. It is about a God who pursues us with relentless affection because that is what the nature of God is.”

What might it mean that “punishment changes nothing”? How is punishment ineffective at changing our character?

8. Young concludes by talking about a different way to think about judgment and crises in our lives: “You will have a crisis. That is the Day of Judgment. The word, “judgment”—krisis, right? That is where we get the word “crisis.” We walk through the veil and we’re going to walk right in the face of a love that is consuming. It’s going to be a crisis for all of us.”

How can we see the crises in our lives as opportunities to know God’s love?

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2 C.S. Lewis is a Christian apologist and classicist who was much influenced by George MacDonald and his fantasy novel, *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women.*