

# The Fourth Sunday of Advent



*My Soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit  
hath rejoiced in God my Savior.*

## HYMN

*Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!  
Of Jesse's lineage coming as seers of old have sung.  
It came a blossom bright, amid the cold of winter,  
when half spent was the night.*

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind,  
with Mary we behold it, the Virgin Mother kind.  
To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior,  
when half spent was the night.*

*O flower, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air.  
dispel in glorious spender the darkness everywhere;  
true man, yet very God, from sin and death now save us,  
and share our every load.*

*(German 15th century)*



Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as  
It was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Our King and Savior now draws near: Come let us adore him:

### **The Song of Zechariah**

*Benedictus Dominus Deus*

*Luke 1:68-79*

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; \*  
he has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty savior, \*  
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old, that he would save us from our enemies, \*  
from the hands of all who hate us.

He promised to show mercy to our fathers \*  
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, \*  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, \*

holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.  
You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, \*  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,  
To give his people knowledge of salvation \* by the forgiveness of their sins.  
In the tender compassion of our God \*  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, \*  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: \*  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

## **THE SONG OF MARY**

### *Magnificat*

My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.  
For he hath regarded  
The lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold from henceforth  
All generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me,  
And holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him  
Throughout all generations.  
He hath showed strength with his arm;  
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He hath put down the mighty from their seat,  
And hath exalted the humble and meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things,  
And the rich he hath sent empty away.  
He remembering his mercy hath helped his servant Israel,  
As he promised to our forefather,  
Abraham and his seed for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

## THE FIRST LESSON

### **Romans 16:25-27**

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith-- to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

## THE CANTICLE

*Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who orders all things mightily;  
to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

## THE SECOND LESSON

### **Luke 1:26-38**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And *now*, [a word absent in the original Greek text] you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

**Other assigned readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-11,16 and Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26**

*To gain a fuller appreciation of Luke's conceptualization of the birth of Jesus, readers might read the entire first chapter of Luke.*

## REFLECTION

By

Norm Wright

+ O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who orders all things mightily+

Luke begins his Gospel with the story of two unexpected pregnancies framed by two questions and two songs of praise. The unexpected pregnancies are that of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptizer and Mary the mother of Jesus. Their story is told within the context of their ancestral relationships to the Aaronic priesthood, which brings to mind Israel's wilderness period in which the Tabernacle was constructed as a meeting place to worship God and house the Ark of the Covenant, where the *Shekinah*, the presence of God dwelt.

Luke's Gospel presents the birth of John and the birth of Jesus as a complimentary set of events. Elizabeth's pregnancy is no less a mystery than Mary's. Each of their sons is given a role to play in God's liberating and redeeming work. John is likened to the voice crying in the wilderness that prepares the way of the Lord (Jesus) as prophesied in Isaiah.

Both Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah were descendants of the priestly line of Aaron, Moses' brother. It is while Zechariah is serving as a priest in the Temple at Jerusalem that the angel Gabriel appears to him in its sanctuary and announces that his "barren" wife Elizabeth would give birth to a son. Gabriel instructs Zechariah to call him John. Frightened, confounded, and feeling somewhat beyond the hope of such a miracle, Zechariah asks, "How can I be sure?"

Since Zechariah has his doubts, Gabriel, in a reversal of the role Aaron played as the spokesperson for Moses, informs Zechariah that he will be rendered speechless until the day of John's birth. When the speechless Zechariah returns home after his tour of Temple duty, Elizabeth becomes pregnant.

Gabriel then appears to Mary, a young girl, living in the Galilean village of Nazareth engaged to Joseph, a descendent of King David. When Gabriel greets her, Mary's reaction is also one of fear and confusion. Gabriel tells Mary she will conceive a son and instructs her to call his name Jesus. Like Zechariah, Mary has a question, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" [literal Greek translation].

The difference between Zechariah's question and Mary's is that Zechariah's question does not proceed from faith, but from a desire for certitude, to know for sure. Mary's question proceeds from the wonderment of faith; that this impossibility could be possible. It is not a question that is looking for a birds and bees answer, but rather a personal enquiry into the joyous mystery of being gifted with a son who "*will be called the Son of the Most High,*"

Staying with the Aaronic connection, Gabriel explains this wondrous birth in terms of Mary becoming a human tabernacle in which the presence of God descends and overshadows her, with the child she will bear becoming like the Ark of a new Covenant where God's presence resides, as suggested in Gabriel's declaration, "*the child to be born will be holy*".

Gabriel informs Mary that her older relative Elizabeth is also pregnant to affirm for Mary that "nothing will be impossible with God." Mary opens herself to the will of God saying, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." As a blood relative of Elizabeth, we learn that Mary is also a descendent of the priestly line of Aaron.

Luke makes sure that we don't overlook the importance of Joseph. Joseph being a direct descendent of King David is an important part of Luke's story. Luke implies that Joseph's role is that of Jesus' biological father, since royal lineage is passed through the father's genes. While the conception of Jesus as the Christ Child in whom the fulness of God resides does not depend on a human biological explanation, Jesus being the son (a descendent) of King David does.

When Mary and Elizabeth meet later in Chapter 1 of Luke, the yet unborn John gives Elizabeth a joyful kick. Elizabeth then blesses Mary and "the fruit" of her womb, Jesus, after which Mary burst into praise and wonderment at being chosen by God with the words of the *Magnificat*.

The first chapter of Luke's Gospel ends with the birth of John the Baptizer. On the day that John was to be circumcised, the gathered relatives of Elizabeth and Zechariah ask what they will name him, thinking he would be named after Zechariah. Elizabeth, speaking for the still speechless Zechariah, says he will be named John. When the relatives complained that none of their relations have such a name, they approach the speechless Zechariah and ask him. He motions his agreement that the baby will be called John and immediately his speech is restored, and he too bursts into praising God with the words of our first canticle, the *Benedictus Dominus Deus*.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, Mary is called the *Theotokos*, which means God-bearer. From this term comes the Western concept of Mary being the Mother of God. That Mary holds an exalted place in the Church is not surprising. Having born in her womb the one whose image we bear, Mary is understood by many to be our Mother. Mary serves as the model for all who ponder the mystery of faith and hold the Christ Child, the Ark of the New Covenant, in their hearts. Amen

## HYMN

*Sing of Mary, pure and lowly, virgin mother undefiled;  
sing of God's own Son most holy, who became her little child.  
Fairest child of fairest mother, God the Lord who came to earth,  
Word made flesh, our very brother, takes our nature by his birth.*

*Sing of Jesus, son of Mary, in the home at Nazareth,  
toil and labor cannot weary love enduring unto death,  
Constant was the love he gave her, though he went forth from her side,  
forth to preach, and heal, and suffer, till on Calvary he died.*

*Glory be to God the Father; glory be to God the Son;  
glory be to God the Spirit; glory to the Three in One,  
From the heart of blessed Mary, from all saints the song ascends,  
and the Church the strain reechoes unto earth's remotest ends*

*(Roland F. Palmer 1891-1985)*



## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name,  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **THE COLLECT OF THE DAY**

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## **THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of Love, we pray for the whole Church and our parish family. Guide your Church and this parish in the way of truth and love.

God of Healing, we pray for all those who are suffering from the effects of Covid-19. We pray for those in church family and those requesting our prayers: Bernard, Sue, Pat and Bev Ann Christensen, Pat Michels, Jolene, Darold Adamson, Somer, Ryan, Jo Neubauer, Bonnie Strnad, and for those we hold in our hearts. On this Sunday we pray for Karen Whitehorse. May all those in need experience the comfort and healing of your presence.

God of Joy, we pray for those celebrating birthdays: Mary Willcockson and Bob Bigley (Dec. 20), Blake O’Gorman (Dec. 21). We pray for those celebrating anniversaries: The 40th Anniversary of Drew and Chris Cope (Dec. 20). May they find joy, happiness, and fulfillment in the coming year.

God our Protector, we pray for those affected by Covid-19; for healthcare workers around the world; for those who provide essential services, first responders, fire fighters, police. We pray for the leaders of all nations, for all government officials every where, and for all those making decisions in times of crisis. Grant them protection and guide those in authority to make wise decisions.

God our Defender, we pray for the homeless and the jobless in our nation, and for those who have lost their homeland, their sense of security, and who find themselves dependent on the good will of others here at home and in strange lands; that their needs are met and grant them the comfort of your Holy Spirit.

God of Life, we pray for those who have died. May all the departed find life in you.

God of Mission, we pray for all bishops, priests, deacons, and all who serve your Church. Grant them guidance in their various ministries and guide us in our mission to enlarge the Family of Faith in our midst.

## **A PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our



Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
Amen

### **THE PRAYER FOR MISSION**

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent you blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near; Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into you fold; pour out you Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of you kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



**MAY THE LORD BLESS US AND KEEP US.  
MAY THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON US AND BE  
GRACIOUS UNTO US.  
MAY THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON US AND GIVE US  
PEACE. AMEN**

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