

DECEMBER 24, 2023
FOURTH SUNDAY
OF ADVENT



Mary finds favor through God's love.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Luke 1:26-38	The birth of Jesus foretold
Monday	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	The Lord's message to David
Tuesday	Romans 16:25-27	Paul's closing prayer
Wednesday	1 Corinthians 13:1-13	The gift of love
Thursday	Psalms 36	Wickedness and God's goodness
Friday	1 John 4:16-21	God is love
Saturday	Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26	God's promise to David
Sunday	Luke 2:22-40	Jesus presented in the temple

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus." Luke 1:30-31 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Everlasting God, your ways are unsearchable and your love never ending; give us the faith to trust in your Son, child of Mary, and Savior of the World. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for this gift of food; give us faith and courage to speak of your steadfast love to all generations. In Jesus' name, amen. (Psalm 89:1)

A Blessing to Give:

May God's grace bless you with faith and love.



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HYMN OF THE WEEK 
Love Has Come

WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- If an angel appeared and told you something, would you believe it? Why or why not?
- How does God's love influence your life?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Luke 1:26-38.

When God's love showers down upon us, it can really turn our lives upside down. That's certainly what happened to Mary. The angel Gabriel announced that she was favored by God and would bear a son who would inherit the throne of King David. Mary was given promises that would seem hard to believe, let alone understand. She was perplexed, to say the least. She had no husband. In her community bearing a child without a husband was nothing less than shameful. Bearing a child in those days was one of the most dangerous events that could happen to a woman. Being ostracized by her neighbors, looking at the prospect of pain, and the possibility of death does not seem like divine favor. This is a story filled with risk, danger, confusion, extreme drama, and surprise. Amid it all, Mary responds with her own act of trust and love and says, "[L]et it be with me according to your word" (v. 38). Mary is the embodiment of a faithful disciple, one who trusts the amazing love of God for her and for all.

Discuss: Do you think Mary's response to Gabriel is surprising?

Pray: **All knowing God, help us to receive your undeserved kindness with courage and love through Jesus Christ, child of Mary, your Son and our Savior. Amen.**

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings and theme for this week, how can you share the good news of Jesus' birth with someone?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

The scripture readings during Advent point to Jesus. This week we light all four candles on the Advent wreath. The fourth candle is the candle of love. Psalm 89 is a praise song to God for all creation: "I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations." Think or talk about the ways we respond to God's great love for us through Jesus.

Light the first candle of hope, the second candle of peace, the third candle of joy, and the fourth candle of love and say: "**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**" (John 1:5)



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org