

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 24TH, 2023



God keeps the promise made to David to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David's throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and by the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, "Count me in." We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, "Count us in."

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

"My Soul Magnifies the Lord"

by J.S. Bach

+Confession and Forgiveness

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,
who opens the heavens
and draws near to us with salvation.

C: **Amen.**

P: God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance.
Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Everlasting God,

C: **you love justice and you hate wrongdoing.
We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness
that make us reluctant to work against oppression.
We are complicit in systems of exploitation.
We choose comfort over courage.
We are careless with creation's bounty.
Look upon us with mercy.
Turn our hearts again to you.
Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways
for the sake of our waiting world.
Amen.**

P: Hear these words of assurance:

God clothes you with garments of salvation
and covers you with robes of righteousness.

In the tender compassion of ✝ Jesus Christ,
your sins are forgiven.

God's covenant is eternal,
and God's blessing rests upon us all.

C: Amen.

+Opening Hymn

"My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness"

ELW 251



1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav - ior's praise!
2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer - cy ev - er flows.
3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;



You looked up - on my low - li - ness, and I am full of grace.
With might - y arm you dash the proud, their schem - ing hearts ex - pose.
the prom - ise to our par - ents made their chil - dren will se - cure.



Now ev - 'ry land and ev - 'ry age this bless - ing shall pro - claim—
The ruth - less you have cast a - side, the low - ly throned in - stead;
Sing glo - ry to the Ho - ly One, give hon - or to the Word,



great won - ders you have done for me, and ho - ly is your name.
the hun - gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un - fed.
and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a - dored.

Text: *With One Voice*, 1995, based on the Magnificat

Music: KINGSFOLD, English folk tune

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+The Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also with you.**

+Advent Candle Lighting & Hymn

"We Light the Advent Candles"
vs 1 & 5



- 1 We light the Ad-vent can - dles a - gainst the win - ter night
- 2 The first one will re - mind us that Christ will soon re - turn.
- 3 We light the sec - ond can - dle, and hear God's ho - ly word.
- 4 Three can - dles now are gleam - ing and show us the true way.
- 5 Four can - dles burn - ing bright - ly an - nounce that Christ has come.



to wel-come our Lord Je - sus, who is the world's true light;
We light it in the dark - ness and watch it gleam and burn.
It tells us, cling to Je - sus, pre - pare to meet your Lord.
Re - joice, the Bap - tist cries out: your Lord has come to - day!
Pre - pare, my heart, be - lieve it, and give the Christ child room!



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P: Let us pray.

Praise to you, O God, who lives with us,
sharing our flesh and bones.

As Mary waited and Joseph dreamed,
so we dream and wait for you.

Bless us and let your face shine upon us,
more radiant than these candles,
and more dear than all else we seek.

Restore us when we fail to refuse the evil and choose the good,
and banish all our fears.

We pray in the name of Emmanuel,
your promised child and our Savior.

C: Amen.

Special Music

“O Come to Us, Emmanuel”

by J. Martin

St. John’s and Trinity Combined Choirs

+Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and
might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly
we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 (read by Ellen Miron, Trinity Quakertown)

The LORD’s promise to David

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” ³Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55 (spoken by combined choirs)

You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly. (Lk. 1:52)

^{46b}My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

⁴⁷my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

⁴⁹you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.

⁵⁰You have mercy on those who fear you,
from generation to generation. R

⁵¹You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,

⁵²casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.

⁵³You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,
to remember the promise of mercy,

⁵⁵the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever. R

Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27 (read by Maureen Potsko, St. John's)

The mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ

²⁵Now 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 ²⁶but 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—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. Here I am, the servant of the Lord;* let it be with me according to your word. *Alleluia.* (*Luke 1:38*)

P: The Holy Gospel according to Luke 1:26-38

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

The angel appears to Mary

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He 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. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The 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. ³⁶And 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. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**



- 1 Signs and won - ders lead the danc - ing from the heart God frees from fear:
- 2 Hope and free - dom join the cir - cle: Mar - y to the gar - den came,
- 3 Cast a - side all fear and hid - ing; hand in hand we dance the round.



wings of an - gels greet the mai - den, and God finds a dwell - ing here;
saw the ra - diance of the mar - vel, heard the Ris - en call her name;
God is with us, Christ, a - bid - ing, and the Spir - it's gifts a - bound.



bold - ly may we lift our hands, bow the head, and voice A - men;
bold - ly may we heed Christ's call, step be - yond the gar - den wall:
Called by God to ho - li - ness, let us bold - ly serve and bless;



thus does glo - ry shine at mid - night: o - pen hearts in - vite the star - light.
beau - ti - ful the feet pro - ceed - ing with good news of death's de - feat - ing.
and to hearts that sigh and hun - ger may our lives dance signs and won - ders.

Text: Susan Palo Cherwien, b. 1953

Music: FREU DICH SEHR, *Trente quatre psaumes de David*, Geneva, 1551

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+Nicene Creed

P: Let us profess our faith with the words in the Nicene Creed.

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

+Prayers of Intercession

L: With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

A brief silence.

You promise mercy to Abraham and Sarah and their descendants forever. Bring your church into thoughtful, caring, and collaborative relationship with those of other faiths. Strengthen our shared values, that we work together in caring for our world. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

As fields and crops lie dormant, bless them with holy rest. Prepare them to thrive, that they provide abundant food in due season. Protect animals who hibernate and provide for all who scavenge for food in the lean season. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You raise up the lowly and cast down the arrogant. Teach humility to all in positions of authority. Break down systems of oppression, especially systems that perpetuate inequity and exclusion. Do not allow wealth, power, or pride to become idols that obscure your call to justice. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Look with favor upon all who cry out to you. Accompany with tenderness all who are afraid or ill. Rescue all who experience abuse or who live under threat of violence, especially refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers in search of a safe and stable home. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You are pleased to make your home among us. Make our homecomings joyful as we gather with friends, families, and chosen families in celebration. Grant safety to all who travel. Sustain the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee

Services and other ministries that assist in setting up new homes.
Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

As conflicts continue to rage around the world, we pray for all in harm's way.
Grant wisdom to world leaders that they might continually strive for peace.
Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Guide the leaders of congregations in transition, especially as they seek to discern the direction of their ministries. Open their hearts and minds to see the powerful presence of your Holy Spirit in their midst. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Blessed are you for Mary and all your servants in every generation who lived according to your promise of mercy (*especially*). Strengthen us by their example until the revelation of your glory is made known. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.
Amen.

Special Music *"On This Day Earth Shall Ring"* arr. Tammy Waldrop
 "Echoes of Faith" Handbell Ensemble
 Trinity Lutheran Church, Quakertown

+ The Lord's Prayer

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be 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,
forever and ever. Amen.**

+Blessing

P: The God of peace bless you,
the love of Christ sustain you in hope,
and the anointing of the Spirit ✝ remain upon you
now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

+Sending Hymn *"Canticle of the Turning/My Soul Cries Out"* ELW 723



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
2 Though I am small, my . . . God, my all, you . . .
3 From the halls of pow'r to the for - tress tow'r, not a
4 Though the na - tions rage from . . age to age, we re -



God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
work great . . things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
jus - tice tears ev - 'ry ty - rant . . from his throne.
liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
The hun - gry poor shall . . weep no more, for the
This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.



Refrain
My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus - tice burn.



Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

+Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

“Savior of the Nations Come”

by J. Pachelbel



Notes about Today's Worship

The hymns in today's service are sung by the combined choirs of St. John's Spinnerstown and Trinity Quakertown.

Pastor David Heckler – Sermon

Worship Leader – Stephen Spry (St. John's)

Acolyte – Maureen Potsko (St. John's)

Lectors – Ellen Miron (Trinity) and Maureen Potsko (St. John's)

Music Leaders –

Carol Dzurenda, Organist

Darcy McConahy, Choir Director
(St. John's)

Michael Kuhnert and John Schwartz, Music Ministers,
(Trinity Quakertown)

Videography – Rob McConahy

Many thanks to all who participated in today's service.