



Introduction

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."

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity,
Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, one God,
whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.**

Together let us honestly and humbly confess
that we have not lived as God desires.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God,
we confess that we are held captive by sin.
In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray.
We have not welcomed the stranger;
we have not loved our neighbor;
we have not been Christ to one another.
Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin.
Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news:
by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven,
and you are free—free from all that holds you back
and free to live in the peaceful kingdom of God.
May you be strengthened in God's love,
† comforted by Christ's peace,
and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 257 (vs 7-8) / LBW 34 (vs 1, 5)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

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. **Amen.**

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

Read the text [here](#).

Psalmody: Luke 1:46b-55

^{46b}My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, ⁴⁷my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸**for 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.

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

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

⁵²**casting 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.

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

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

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

We are in Advent. A season of joyful expectations. Most, if not all, of us, have experienced a birth in the family. For some like me, it is a niece or a nephew. For others, it is a new sibling or a new cousin in the family. Then there are the parents and grandparents. We can all remember the joy of anticipating the new person coming into the family.

Then come the questions, the concerns, the what ifs. Will I be a good parent? How will this new person affect the family? Will the new baby take my place as the youngest? Will the baby be healthy? What will his or her personality be? The questions and worries are endless... and that is with a fully human baby.

Today's Gospel and psalmody tell us of a young woman named Mary. She is a young woman, recently engaged, looking forward and planning for her upcoming wedding. She may have wondered what life would be like with Joseph. How will things be the same or different?

Then, BOOM!! an angel appears. Now that would be a scary thing by itself. An angel of the Lord has visited her. Would you not be frightened if an angel visited you?

She has a right to be nervous. Anyone who has kept up with the scriptures would know that life is never the same when an angel appears. Things will change.

Mary is told that she will become pregnant in an unusual, miraculous way. God will be the father. Mary will have a fully human baby with all the joys and concerns, yet this expected baby is also the Son of God. The Most High, the Messiah. WOW!!

God comes to Mary and gives her the gift of raising Jesus. It will be a joyful experience, yet she will have the same questions that we all have when a new child comes into the family. But you know it will be in her mind that she is also responsible for a special child, one given to the world from God. Talk about pressure!

Mary responds that she is the Lord's servant. She accepts the responsibility without knowing just what is involved. We know the end of this story. Jesus saves the world through his birth, life, death, and resurrection. Have you heard Mary's acceptance described as "divine grace" and inwardly thought Mary had "blind faith"?

Today, with Mary, we can celebrate and look forward to the birth of Jesus. We can look at life with great expectations now. From today's Gospel, we can expect to find God all around us. God will come down and meet us, just like God did with Mary, Elizabeth, Moses, and all the others. God has a long history of coming to the working people, to those who do not have it all, and coming to those who need a boost in life.

God does all this because God loves us and is full of grace. The gift of Jesus and the gift of faith comes from God. We can join Mary in her song, the Magnificat. We rejoice that God has favored the lowly. That includes all of us. God's grace had been given to all of us.

Feel free to participate in the joy and expectations of the season. We will soon celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Feel free to rejoice that God loves us. Feel free to rejoice in God being with us and being compassionate to us. God will give us gifts in life. Not as spectacular as Mary's, but we should still expect them and use them to magnify God. With God, amazing things are possible. Even here and now, God has and will continue to grace us with wonderful moments, gifts, and love. Amen

Hymn of the Day ELW # 254 / LBW # 30 *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Nicene Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**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

God of power and might, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of all faiths. Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creator God, you scatter the proud. Everything we have belongs first to you. Bless and protect the seas, mountains, plains, forests, skies, and soils that surround us. Give us humility as we tend them. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Compassionate God, you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Encourage others to provide for their neighbors in need. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Healing God, you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence *especially those we name now*. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, you are faithful to the promises you made to our forebears. We give thanks for the ministry our ancestors who organized, planned, dreamed, encouraged, and reached out as they served you. We give thanks for the bold leadership of female leaders in our own time. Inspire others with their steadfast witness.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.

Closing Hymn ELW # 239 / LBW # 35

Hark, the Glad Sound!

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Vicar Mike Lang.