



‘Worship at home’ Sunday December 22nd 2024



This is the **fourth Sunday in Advent**,
as we celebrate God’s love for us, shown in the
coming of Christ, and our hope for a time
when God’s reign of love will be fulfilled.

Opening

How do we know love in changing times?

We know love through God who is love.

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

How do we know love in this time of Advent?

***God so loved the world that he gave his only son,
who renews and restores us,
bringing love to the world,
and love to our lives.***

Let us worship the One who leads us on:

in the promise of the Spirit of love.

For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and
only Son, that whoever
believes in him shall not
perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

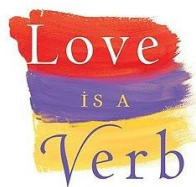
As we anticipate the celebration of
Christmas, in changing and
uncertain times, we are
encouraged to reflect on how we
respond to God’s love for us, and
how we then live in that love.

How do you experience God’s love?

How do you express God’s love?

We often take love to mean a warm fuzzy feeling of gratitude and wellbeing, or an exciting rollercoaster of emotions experienced by young people on a first date. The love that Jesus teaches about seems to be less about what we feel and marked more by a commitment to respond in a certain way.

We are reminded that love is a verb, as well as a noun. Love is something we choose to do as we relate to others. Our commitment to love then shapes our feelings. When love is the very core of our being, all that we are and do flows from that.



Luke 1:39-45

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a young woman promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!" Mary was deeply troubled by the angel's message, and she wondered what his words meant. The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God.

The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was, and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end!" Mary said to the angel, "I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God. Remember your relative Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God cannot do." "I am the Lord's servant," said Mary; "may it happen to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Good News Bible

Mary was just a teenager, an ordinary girl from an ordinary family, when she found she was to be the mother of Jesus. We can imagine her feeling anxious and uncertain at the news. Did she know that this would lead her to pain and grief?

When have you been asked to do something you felt was beyond you, or might be risky?

Mary responds with courage, with humility and grace, deliberately and boldly affirming her trust in the God who loves her and will never ask more of her than the Holy Spirit will empower her to do.

Statement of faith

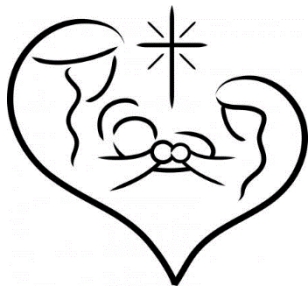
Our souls magnify the Lord,
and our spirits rejoice
in God our Saviour,
for he looks with favour upon us
and sees our unrealized potential.

In the tradition of Mary,
and all who have said “yes” to God,
we stand here today,
to add our assent to theirs.

Like Mary, we feel overwhelmed;
we wonder if we are worthy,
or capable, of following the calling.
Like Mary, we have our questions
and we will not be afraid to ask them.
Like Mary, we will hear and ponder
the assurance that God will empower us.
Like Mary we will strive to say -
“Let it be with us according to your will.”

To whatever God is inviting of us
at this time in our lives,
and relying on God’s grace, we say “yes.”

~ Ann Siddall <http://stillpointsa.org.au/prayer/prayers-and-liturgies/>



In a time of change and uncertainty, we are waiting for light to shine in the darkness of our world, and for the fullness of God’s love to be revealed. In the midst of this, we pray for the courage to love and to trust, even when we can’t see the way ahead.

Luke 1:46-55

Mary said, "My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Saviour, for he has remembered me, his lowly servant! From now on all people will call me happy, because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me. His name is holy; from one generation to another he shows mercy to those who honour him. He has stretched out his mighty arm and scattered the proud

with all their plans. He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors, and has come to the help of his servant Israel. He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham and to all his descendants forever!"

Good News Bible

Closing prayer

Merciful God,
may Mary's song be heard through the ages,
drowning out the din of Christmas chaos.
May it be heard by the victims of violence, conflict
and oppression all over the world.
May it ring in the ears of the traumatised
and those in refugee camps.
May it sing in the hearts of those
standing strong for justice for those on the margins.
May it nourish hope in the bellies
of those fearful of failed harvests, droughts, fires and floods.
May it bring comfort to those who have lost loved ones,
livelihoods, or security due to the pandemic.
May it be a song that stirs reverent fear
in the hearts of those who assume power.
And may the joyful promises of justice and overturned power
fill all our hearts to overflowing action.

Amen.

~ adapted from prayer from the **Christian Aid** website. <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/>

