

The Readings on This Day

***Click on the links for the Bible Verse(s)

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Throughout Advent we acclaim that God comes, in the past in the history of Israel and the incarnation of Jesus, in the present in the word and sacrament of each Sunday, and in the future at the end of all things. Only on this fourth Sunday do the readings refer to the story of Jesus' birth as an arrival of God among us. At the thanksgiving at table, we join with Mary to praise God for salvation.



[Micah 5:2-5a](#)

The passage from Micah is set next to the Advent story of the visitation because of its references to a pregnant woman, to Bethlehem, and to the coming one who will rule "to the ends of the earth." Christians see this hope of Micah fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The Psalm for the Day

There are two options for the response to the first reading. The first is the Song of Mary, [Luke 1:46b-55](#). *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* includes seven settings of at least part of the Magnificat: pages 314-315 and hymn numbers 234, 235, 251, 573, 723, 882, and the canon of #236. Christians join Mary in praising God for past, present, and future salvation.

The other option is [Psalm 80:1-7](#). Especially appropriate following the reading from Micah, the psalm speaks of Israel and his descendants and the one who like a shepherd will come to save us.

[Hebrews 10:5-10](#)

The Hebrews passage is set next to the Advent story of the visitation because of its emphasis on doing God's will. Throughout his infancy narratives, Luke stresses that Mary willingly accepted and embodied the will of God. In the Bible, to accept God's will is to live in grace; it is God's will for us to be saved. Only recently have some Christians equated God's will with a detailed personal plan for one's life. The author of Hebrews writes theology, not biography, when putting these words into Christ's mouth. This is one example of how formative for early Christian beliefs were the psalms.

[Luke 1:39-45 \[46-55\]](#)

Mary, Elizabeth, and all the baptized have been filled with the Holy Spirit. God's promise comes especially to the downtrodden, the hungry, the lowly. We are thus called to stand with these people, as Elizabeth did, and be surprised to discover in them the presence of God.