

Advent 4

December 20, 2026 (Year B)



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

(Mary) might have doubted, but she shut her eyes and trusted in God who could bring all things to pass, even though common sense were against it; and because she believed, God did to her as he had said.

– Martin Luther–

Martin Luther's Christmas Book, p.14

2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

King David is a complex figure in Scripture: at once a heroic leader, while at the same time a shameful sinner. He is the perfect example of what Luther meant when he wrote that believers are “*simul justis et peccator*.” He was both a beacon of faithfulness and a complete moral failure. But again and again he reflected a faith and trust in the God of his fathers that defined his character.

Here in 2 Samuel, David declared to Nathan his intent to build a temple for the God of Israel. David now rested comfortably in a palace and found it unseemly for God to continue to have only a tent. But God was not interested in any temples David might build for him; He was perfectly content to dwell among his people in a tent. God had other plans in the works; God was going to build a kingdom, an everlasting house for David. It is God's building, not David's, that will stand the test of time.

- In what ways are we like David in wanting to build dwelling places for the Lord? In what ways do our concerns for the trappings of religion reflect our original sin?
- How did David's plan for a temple reflect his desire, not simply to honor God, but to rein God in?
- What was the “house” that God would build for David and his ancestors? Why would God make everlasting promises to such profoundly sinful people – both then and now?

Psalms 89:1–5 (19–29)

Psalms 89 is a song of praise in response to God's everlasting covenant with David. The promises of God moved David to sing with joy and thanksgiving. Here the right relationship between God and his chosen ones is reflected. David does not point to the work of his own hands as the offering of something to God. He does not point to a temple he has built and bear witness to his own faithfulness and piety. Rather, he points to the unwavering faithfulness of the only one who knows what true faithfulness is.

- In what ways does God's faithfulness inspire his people to be faithful? Have you seen that in your own life of faith?

The Hebrew word that is translated in verse 1 as “steadfast love” is *chesed*. *Chesed* has a depth of meaning that encompasses not only unswerving and unfailing love, but also loyalty, faithfulness, mercy, and kindness.

- Which of these qualities of *chesed* do you find lacking in our world today? Why do you think that is?

Romans 16:25–27

This doxological ending to Romans is unique among Paul's letters. It may reflect the fact that the letter to the Romans had come to be used in the public worship of the church and the formal words of praise in these verses served a liturgical purpose.

Among the many things to be said about God here is that he strengthens his chosen ones and brings about the obedience of faith. As we near the end of the Advent season, and as we anticipate continued waiting for the new kingdom, these words remind us that we are not the source or our strength or the source of our faith. Our hope is entirely dependent upon the wisdom of God through Jesus Christ.

- What are some of the claims this doxology makes about God?
- What is the mystery that was kept secret but now has been disclosed? How have the mysteries of God been disclosed to you? How does the Gospel strengthen you?

Luke 1:26–38

Of all the words that might describe this visit from the angel Gabriel, “perplexing” seems especially apt. Here we have a young girl, likely a teenager, engaged, but not yet married, and with no advance warning, no prior indications, she was selected to be the mother of the Lord. She was selected to bear the incarnate God. Gabriel called her “favored one” and Mary wondered what that could possibly mean. Her life to that point had not provided evidence of favored status.

- To be “favored” does not mean you are better than others, it means that someone has “done you a favor.” In what sense was Mary favored (shown grace) by God?

As if the greeting itself weren't perplexing enough, the message the angel brought raised things to a whole new level. The child she would bear on behalf of the Living God would reign on David's throne forever.

After hearing all that Gabriel had to say, Mary uttered one of the most astounding sentences in all of scripture. “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” She did not protest. She did not put on a display of humility; she did not ask more questions. She simply entrusted herself to God's purposes.

- Where do you think Mary's faith came from? How did she find a way to entrust herself to God? What does her response show us about faithfulness and obedience?