

**Lessons for The Fourth Sunday in Advent**

**December 24, 2023**

Psalm 89:1–5 (19–29) ~ *A celebration of God's faithfulness to his covenant through David's lineage.*  
2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16 ~ *Instead of David building a temple, the Lord promised to build a dynasty for David.*  
Romans 16:25–27 ~ *Jesus is God's ancient promise fulfilled, bringing people to faith, and glory to God.*  
Luke 1:26–38 ~ *Mary humbly accepted God's role for her as the mother of His Son and David's heir.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** Man Proposes; God Disposes

When King David saw the contrast between the portable building of the tabernacle and his own fine cedar mansion, he was ready to build a nice temple for the Lord, but God said He would build a dynasty for David instead. Mary and Joseph had made plans for their life and even set the date for their wedding, but God said there was a more important role Mary was to play as the mother of the Messiah. St. Paul pointed out that God's plan for the redemption of Israel was fulfilled in Mary's child, the heir of David's line, who is the cornerstone of the temple built with living stones.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Lord God, your love shines brightly into this dark world of sin. Help me grasp its bold beams and reflect the light of your love in the dark shadows where so many people still live. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** Can we, who have received so much from God and are loved by Him and have been served by Him, do anything less than humbly imitate His giving and loving and serving?

**OFFERING PRAYER:** In love, O Lord, we give to You  
As You have given to us.  
Grant that in love we learn to do  
Your will in humble trust. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** Even today, we have more questions about this event than Mary did! That is enough to point out our pride and lack of faith. How difficult it is for us to say, "Behold, I am the Lord's servant." Thanks be to God! He did not allow the questions, the pride, or the lack of faith, so prevalent in our fallen state, to prevent His loving task of working our salvation!

**Questions to Consider:** When does love mean never having to ask "Why?"

- How did God keep his promise of providing an enduring house and kingdom for David?
- What is it about the proclamation of Jesus Christ that brings glory to God?
- What questions beside, "How can this be?" would we like to ask of Gabriel?
- Whose servant are we when we ask questions that betray our pride and lack of faith?

**See next page for bonus: As Rachel Wept** – A poem for Feast of the Holy Innocents, Dec. 28

### **As Rachel Wept**

As Rachel wept in Ramah, Mary trudged  
along the road to Egypt. She could hear  
her sisters' cry in Bethlehem. Their dirge  
of sorrow filled the night with pain and fear.  
Her own dear child she cradled in her arms  
while other mothers held their lifeless sons  
close to their aching breasts – their mortal forms  
dispatched by Herod's sword! Those little ones  
poured out their blood so Mary's child could live!  
A different sword another time turned in  
her heart when her son's blood would flow to give  
His people life and rescue them from sin.  
Still Rachel weeps today, but now for joy:  
the Savior of the world is Mary's boy!

*– Gilbert A. Franke, 12/09/08*