

Fourth Sunday of Advent

[Reading I: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 89:2-3, 4-5, 27-29](#)

[Reading II: Romans 16:25-27](#)

[Gospel: Luke 1:26-38](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/122423.cfm>



On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, our focus is on the historical coming of Jesus, who Jesus is, and what the Jewish community was expecting. Our first reading describes the promise made to David and it is repeated in a passage from First Chronicles.

II Samuel 7: 11-12, 14a, 16

The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.”

See also I Chr 17: 11 – 14

In the passage from Samuel, David becomes uncomfortable with the fact that he is living in a high-class dwelling and the Ark of the Covenant, the sign of God's presence, was in a tent.

He expresses to the prophet Nathan, that he desires to build a temple to house the Ark. After prayerful reflection, Nathan, says to David, that God does not need a house built by human hands. Instead, God will establish a dynasty in the house of David, and one of David's descendants will have an eternal reign.

Following the reign of David, the promise made to him became a core part of the identity of the Jewish people. While the covenant at Mt Sinai following the exodus from Egypt was central before David, following David, the promise of a firm kingdom became the focus. The expectation was that God would establish a lasting and secure geopolitical kingdom. Judah would know and experience God's favor in having a lasting political kingdom. The kings of Israel and Judah became more interested in securing their power than maintaining their relationship with God. With the conquest by Babylon in 597 and 588, the people of Judah were deported, and the kingdom was only partly reestablished when they returned. Then Judah was conquered by the Greeks and later the Romans.

Jesus was not recognized because he did not establish a kingdom in a political sense with wealth and benefits for the people of Judah. Jesus established the reign of God that called for a new way of living summarized in the Sermon on the Mount and the feeding of the hungry, caring for those in need, and respect for each person.

The Gospel passage declares that Jesus is this successor to David by pointing out that Joseph is of the line of David (this is stressed even more in Matthew's Gospel). The angel declares that he will have the throne of David his father: “The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” The kingdom that Jesus established will last forever but is not a reign like human kingdoms that use force. Jesus establishes the reign of God in each person's heart through an invitation to a relationship. Jesus is finally recognized as king only by the Roman proclamation nailed to his cross, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. The early church understood that God's promise to not withdraw his favor from David's descendants was shown in the resurrection, not even death could end Jesus' reign. It is also shown through Mary conceiving Jesus through the power of the Most High overshadowing her and the proclamation that Jesus is the son of the Most High. This is

done through God's work, not the work of human beings. God works with us through invitation and not by force. Mary is asked to cooperate and even though she does not understand when she says yes. God works with us in the same way – always inviting and never forcing.

Luke cannot limit his attention to the birth of Jesus. He presents it in the context of the whole history of Israel that leads to the reign of God experienced in the lives of Christians.

The second reading is the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Romans. It is a bit challenging since it is all one sentence. The key points are:

The mystery: God cares for and offers salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles. This was an astonishing fact for the Jewish people. They understood themselves to be God's chosen ones and they looked forward to the benefits of this fact. The Gentiles worshipped idols and did not have an ethical morality. Why would God care about them? In God's plan, The Jews were chosen to bring God's Word into the world and the means by which the Messiah came into the world. They were chosen for a mission, and not for themselves.

Manifest through the prophets: It was not that the prophets foresaw the events and details of Life and ministry. Rather in looking at the life and ministry of Jesus, new insights were gained into the message of the prophets. A second level of meaning was recognized after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The passage ends with giving God glory through Jesus because that is how we are connected to God.

Themes:

Incarnation

Jesus, son of God and son of Mary

Reign or Kingdom of God

Mary

Reflection Questions:

What are your expectations about the reign of God?

How have you experienced God's invitation in your life?

What can we learn from Mary's response to the angel?

Where in your life do you need to be reminded that "Nothing is impossible for God?"

What insights have you gained into the prophets in your reflection on the scriptures?

Suggestions for Prayer:

For the Church: that our hearts may be an authentic dwelling place for God and thus enable us to bring God's presence to all whom we encounter

For a listening heart: that our hearts may be stilled and quieted so that we may hear the Word of God as it comes to us in word, people, and experience each day

For all believers: that we, like Mary, may ponder God's invitations and give our full yes to all that God asks of us so that the human family may follow God's will

For hope in the face of fear: that God's faithfulness will free and strengthen us from every bondage and limit that our fears evoke

For confidence in God's providence: that in facing life's obstacles, we may place our trust in God for whom nothing is impossible

