

**Worship on December 22, 2024 (Fourth Sunday of Advent)**

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Christine Tian)

**Sunday Order of worship**

**We Gather**

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to worship (See the insert) (Light the candle of love)
- Lighting the LOVE candle – BOP 119 Hope of a star (vs. 3)
- Praise song BOP 110 Come, thou long-expected Jesus
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 129 Prepare the way, O Zion
- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Micah 5:2-5a
- Second reading: Psalm 80:1-7 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Luke 1:39-55
- Sermon: **Overflowing love**
- Hymn BOP 371 Love divine, all loves excelling
- Prayer for the people

**We Respond**

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 79) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 133 Go, tell it on the mountain

**We Serve**

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

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**Welcome and Announcement:**

**Responsive call to worship:** (Please see the insert) (Light the candle of love)

**BOP 119 Hope of a star (vs. 4)**

**Praise song – BOP 110 Come, thou long-expected Jesus**

**Prayer of Adoration**

O God, our Saviour, like Mary rejoiced in you, our spirits rejoice in you this day, for you look with favour on your people. You have done great things for us. You have scattered the proud and lifted up the lowly. You have filled the hungry with good things, and kept the promises made to our ancestors. Your mercy is known from generation to generation. And so, we praise and magnify your holy name and worship you as Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.

Merciful God, in your gracious presence we confess our sins and the sins of this world.

**Prayer of confession (Unison)** *(Let us come to God with the prayer of confession in unison.)*

**Although we have found love in Christ, we are a people divided against ourselves and against one another. We have not loved as you love us and we have too often been careless**

**with our words, our bodies and how we treat others and your world. We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom, intellect and reason, and have turned them into bonds of oppression. Lord, have mercy upon us. Heal us, forgive us and set us free to serve you in the world as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ.**

**Heavenly Father, hear us, as we offer the Prayer that Jesus taught us:** (The Lord's Prayer:)  
**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

### **Words of Assurance**

Hear and believe the Good News: our sins are forgiven and we are a new creation, the old life is gone, the new life has come;  
know that you are forgiven and you have the courage and love to forgive others.

**May the Peace of the Lord be with you.** *(Let us bless each other with the peace of the Lord.)*

### **Praise song – BOP 129 Prepare the way, O Zion**

### **Prayer for children**

### **Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)**

- First reading: Micah 5:2-5a
- Second reading: Psalm 80"1-7 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Luke 1:39-55

**"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."**

### **SERMON: Overflowing love**

Today's Luke passage is known as the Magnificat. It is a Latin for My soul magnifies the Lord. Mary visited her relative Elizabeth with curiosity and somewhat worrisome spirit. But, when they greeted each other, Mary found out that Elizabeth was really pregnant. And Elizabeth told Mary that her baby in her womb was leaping in joy. Two women sharing the miraculous pregnancy were speechless in wonder and awe of God's works in them. Here, Mary praised God. That is called The Magnificat. "My soul magnifies the Lord."

There are two parts in Mary's praise.

First, v46-50, Mary sings God's love shown in his faithfulness to her. Before she came, the angel came to her and told her in v30, **"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."**

Surprised, Mary asked, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God."**

In addition, to Mary, the angel said about Elizabeth's pregnancy in her old age. Mary humbly accepted what was said to her, answering, **"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."**

After the visit of the angel, Mary visited Elizabeth and found out that what the angel said was all true. She realized the love of God for her and God's faithfulness keeping the promise. Mary would have experienced fear out of the unknown, but at the same time, assured because of God's faithfulness keeping the promise. Standing before God in reverence, Mary accepted God's promise of what's going to happen. **"[God] has looked with favour on me, the lowliness of his servant. What am I that God looked at me and chose me! What am I to become the mother of Son of God! Surely, from now on, all generations will call me blessed."**

When we think about God choosing Mary, what do we feel? What is our response?

Wow, Holy Mary. God's chosen one. So special.

Well.. Yes, but we can see and learn that God can choose anyone. Like she mentions "the lowliness of his servant." She was referring herself. In their social background, they didn't even include women when they count. Women did not have much right at that time. In this social background, God chose a little girl Mary, not from any royal family. This teaches us that God can choose anybody. In a broader perspective, God chose each and every one of us to be his precious child. God called each and every one of us to build his own church. God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ to be with us and to rescue us. It is not that your friend invited you that you are here. It's not that you just walked in this church building some random day that you are here. You are here sitting right now in the pew because God called you. God chose you to be here and God wants you to know that he loves you. He showed his love to Mary, who was nobody at that time, in order to teach us that, he choose us also. **Hebrews 13:8, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** With his faithfulness, with the same love that God loved Mary, God loves each and every one of us so dearly and unwaveringly and unchangingly. So, in this Christmas season, let us celebrate the love of God for us. He invites us to build personal relationships with himself. Trust God's faithfulness and unfailing love for you.

The second part of Mary's Magnificat is about love shown in the mercy of God to all people.

Mary focuses not only on mercy of God upon individuals, but also upon all people. God's mercy is for the people who fear God. God scattered the proud, the powerful, and the rich. Through this, God wants to teach all of us his power and might. In God's heart, he might say this:

You are holding on to your own power? That's not gonna work. You are holding on to your riches? If that becomes your confidence and pride, that's not gonna hold you up. It is me holding you up. It's me that gives life. It's me that gives power. Through my mercy and grace, you can have life. It is not your wealth that can save you. It is not your power or fame that can provide peace and joy. It is I the God who is powerful, who is rich, and who is fair and righteous.

Mary's praise focuses only on God.

God acts powerfully in the world. God brings justice by reversing human societal systems by lifting up the humble and opposing the proud. God provides mercy to the hungry and needy. God remembers his promises and fulfills them through his covenant with Israel.

Most importantly, now Mary realized the coming of the Messiah through her for who? All people from generation to generation.

God cares for each individual. God does not neglect anyone. When we pass by a homeless person on the street, we give them some changes if we have some. But, deep in our hearts, we consider them living a "lowly life." Lower social status. If they talk to me first, I feel somewhat scared. I try to show God's love to them, but deep inside me, I don't know how to love them. I can't love them. I differentiate myself from them.

Unlike this protective heart human or selfishness of human, mature or immature, God is different. God's love is for everyone. My humanly love, or love of many people who want to

help them, cannot be compared by God's unconditional love. God's love is for everyone, in the same way. Let us rely upon God's love. Let us trust his love for each person.

Mary's praise, The Magnificat, is a powerful reflection of God's love. The love is actually practical in both individual and the whole group. This love was shown in Jesus' coming to us and redeeming us to restore our brokenness.

In this Christmas season, let us share the love of God and the good news through Jesus' birth on earth with the people around us. Let us worship God for his great love for us. And let us live his love by remembering why Jesus came and what Jesus did for us. With his overflowing love, he came to us and he rescued us. Let us worship our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ and celebrate his presence in us.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

### **Praise song – BOP 371 Love divine, all loves excelling**

#### **Prayer for the people:**

Be glorified, Lord. Be praised! Be lifted up. We praise you and we worship you. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Your love for us is outpouring every day and upon everyone. Your love is abundant. Your love is patient. Your love is forever the same in your faithfulness. We come to you because of your love. Thank you.

Just as you chose Mary to be your vessel of Good News, we ask that, please, you use us too. Give us clear minds that we can discern our gifts. And give us courage to focus on how you are working in our lives and live accordingly. We are many, but we form one body. Through our different gifts, backgrounds, and experiences, build your church. As one body, we want to experience your Holy Spirit working in us and as one body, we want to display your goodness and shine your light to our communities. Because of your love, bind us into one body.

We pray for the people with challenging situations. Teach them that you are near. Tell them your love, again and again and again. Whenever their hearts are discouraged due to many different reasons, hold them in your arms and speak your love and encourage them and empower them. With your powerful hands, heal the sick, restore brokenness, empower them to stand up again, and make us grow in you.

With all our hearts, we want to love you. Our Father, our Redeemer, our Comforter. Thank you for being with us always. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

#### **Invitation to the offering:**

We make our offering this day with hearts full of love, filled with the thanksgiving and hope and joy this season brings. Give your offerings to God knowing God's love will spread far and wide through what we offer in Jesus' name. As we praise and worship God with our gifts, let us glorify him with all our hearts. Let the offering be received. *BOP #79, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*

#### **Offering prayer:**

God of life and love, receive our gifts as tokens of our love for you and signs of our willingness to share that love in the world around us. Bless our lives as well as our gifts, so that we may be a blessing to others for the sake of the Christ Child, our Saviour and our friend. Amen.

**Song for the Journey – BOP 133 Go, tell it on the mountain**

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. God loves you whether you believe it or not, whether you can accept it or not, whether you are ashamed or proud. God's love for you never fails. God's love for you never runs dry. God's love for you is unchanging. God's love for you is overflowing. So, please love yourself and look at yourself with the eyes of our God the Father.

**Benediction:** May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, our Father, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.