

## **Introduction**

God keeps the promise made to David to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David's throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and by the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, "Count me in." We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, "Count us in."

## **Prayer of the Day**

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16**

*Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.*

<sup>1</sup>Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup>Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" <sup>8</sup>Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup>and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

## Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

<sup>1</sup>Your love, O LORD, forever | will I sing;

from age to age my mouth will pro- | claim your faithfulness.

<sup>2</sup>**For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is estab- | lished forever;  
you have set your faithfulness firmly | in the heavens.**

<sup>3</sup>“I have made a covenant with my | chosen one;

I have sworn an oath to Da- | vid my servant:

<sup>4</sup>**‘I will establish your | line forever,  
and preserve your throne for all | generations.’”**

<sup>19</sup>You spoke once in a vision and said to your | faithful people:

“I have set the crown upon a warrior and have exalted one chosen out | of the people.

<sup>20</sup>**I have found Da- | vid my servant;  
with my holy oil have I a- | nointed him.**

<sup>21</sup>My hand will | hold him fast  
and my arm will | make him strong.

<sup>22</sup>**No enemy | shall deceive him,  
nor shall the wicked | bring him down.**

<sup>23</sup>I will crush his | foes before him  
and strike down | those who hate him.

<sup>24</sup>**My faithfulness and steadfast | love are with him,  
and he shall be victorious | through my name.**

<sup>25</sup>I will set his hand | on the sea,  
and his right hand | on the rivers.

<sup>26</sup>**He will say to me, ‘You | are my father,  
my God, and the rock of | my salvation.’**

## Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38

*In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.*

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,  
<sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, "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. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

## Prayers of Intercession

God of power and might, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

*A brief silence.*

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season, we pray for our neighbours of other denominations and faiths. Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Creator God, you scatter the proud. Everything we have belongs first to you. Bless and protect the seas, mountains, plains, forests, skies, and soils that surround us. Give us humility as we tend them. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Compassionate God, you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Encourage others to provide for their neighbours in need. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Healing God, you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence (*especially those who we name at this time, aloud or silently on our hearts...* [pause]). Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Eternal God, you are faithful to the promises you made to our forebears. We give thanks for the ministry of Katharina von Bora Luther and other ancestors who organized, planned, dreamed, encouraged, and reached out as they served you. We give thanks for the bold leadership of female leaders in our own time. Inspire others with their steadfast witness. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## ***A reflection for the Fourth Sunday of Advent...***

### Those Who Hear and Do

Who is God's family? Where is God's home? In the church we often speak of our home parish as a family. Many of us grew up thinking of the church building as God's house. But the readings for this day call us to anticipate that Emmanuel might understand kinship and home in different ways. As we approach Christmas, which in our culture is increasingly a celebration of hearth and home more than a public festival, the inclusiveness of God's promise rings out from these readings.

The temple often stood in the imagination of Israel as the "house of God," but in 1 Samuel God expresses reservations before the temple is even built. The promise made to David is not about the building. Instead of the expected places of wealth and power, God chooses to dwell in a *people* instead of a "house of cedar" (2 Sam. 7:2, 7).

So if God is dwelling in a people, who is included in *that* promise? Although no one disputes that Jesus is born of the "house of David," Luke's gospel stresses Mary's lowliness instead of her bloodlines, reminding us that Christ became flesh in the most unlikely circumstances. Later in Luke's gospel, when someone mentions his family to Jesus, he says his family includes all "who hear the word of God and do it" (8:21). In today's gospel we see Mary acting out that definition of family.

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Gloria Dei  
LUTHERAN CHURCH