



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 22 DECEMBER 2024 – Advent 4**

COLLECT

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,
so we may be ready to greet him
when he comes again as our judge;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 80.1-8

- 1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, ♦
you that led Joseph like a flock;
- 2 Shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim, ♦
before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
- 3 Stir up your mighty strength ♦
and come to our salvation.
- 4 Turn us again, O God; ♦
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 5 O Lord God of hosts, ♦
how long will you be angry at your people's prayer?
- 6 You feed them with the bread of tears; ♦
you give them abundance of tears to drink.
- 7 You have made us the derision of our neighbours, ♦
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
- 8 Turn us again, O God of hosts; ♦
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

A reading from the book of Micah, chapter 5, verses 2-5a.

Micah 5.2-5a

The Ruler from Bethlehem

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from Luke, chapter 1, verses 39-45.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel. Everywhere except Fitz introduces it with an Acclamation (the blue bit), and then we all use the introduction and ending (the green bit):

Alleluia. **Alleluia.**

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Luke, Chapter 1, verses 39-45.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Luke 1.39-45

Mary Visits Elizabeth

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

A Reflection from Peter...

Think for a moment of a painting of the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel telling Mary she is to be the mother of the Son of God. Almost certainly you will find yourself thinking of a picture of extraordinary peace and recollection: Mary waiting patiently – almost as if she was expecting the angel! It's not that we believe Mary was just waiting quietly – we suspect it was much more of a sudden surprise – but representing Mary as so peaceful, so quiet and prayerful helps us appreciate just what a huge step she took when she said yes to God. Today we hear the next bit of the Gospel. The angel has gone and Mary rushes off to see her cousin Elizabeth. This scene has not attracted nearly so many artists. There are comparatively few paintings of the Visitation and they are, not surprisingly, much more homely, more natural. Here are two expectant mothers, one about to give birth, the other bursting with the news that she is pregnant, meeting to catch up, to compare notes. But even here the ordinary is overlaid with the awareness of God's presence and power: Luke tells us 'Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.' Right in the midst of their doubtless very ordinary chatter about what was happening to them both, Elizabeth recognises the importance of the moment: 'Why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?' As this Advent draws to a close and the light of Christmas breaks in we pause and reflect on the way that God worked with Mary and Elizabeth – and the way he works with us. God comes to us in the ordinary things of life – making a home, bringing up children, coping with pandemics, being bewildered by the world – and out of anything and everything God brings new life, new possibilities, new hope. We give thanks for all God has done for us and with us and pray that we may go on being ready to say yes to all that God longs still to do for us.