

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
DECEMBER 19, 2021  
SMALL GROUP REFLECTIONS



- Open with Prayer
  - Read Message Introduction
  - Read the Gospel
- [optional – all 3 readings]
- Discuss Reflection & Questions
  - Close with Prayer and Personal / Group Intentions

**Expect Miracles:** A miracle is when God intervenes and breaks through into history in a dramatic and unusual way, in a way that defies the usual rules of nature. A miracle appeals to our senses to remind us that God is indeed with us. The first Christmas was a miracle. Through the Christmas story, the people who expect miracles and are on the lookout for God experience miracles and the joy of the incarnation. The people who are not looking for God's activity miss out on it.

SCRIPTURE: Micah 5:1-4; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

*Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."*

RECAP ADVENT JOURNEY:

There are more miracle stories in Luke's Gospel than any other. And we begin to see a pattern. First Sunday of Advent: Times of trial often precede miracles. Second Sunday: With every miracle, God does not act alone – first, He looks to us. We do the possible and God does the impossible. We collaborate with God. Third Sunday: Pray – if we want change, if we want a miracle, ask for it, without anxiety, with thanksgiving. Fourth Sunday: What is the most essential ingredient to a miracle? To "believe" in our good God. To "trust" that the miracle he desires for you is possible.

**This week:** Elizabeth says the word, the action on our part that is absolutely vital to us if we are to experience a miracle this Christmas. The Gospel tells us over and over again that when people exhibited this and took this step then miracles happened. And when people could not take this step then even Jesus could not work miracles. **Here's the absolute key to experiencing a miracle, embedded in this phrase from Elizabeth. She says, "And blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."**

1. Re-read the Gospel – Earthshaking events are in motion, look for the range of emotions that surround the encounter of Mary and Elizabeth.
2. The journey from Nazareth to Elizabeth was long and yet there was no way Mary was not going to go. Mary, who carries the secret - she is the womb of God. The light of Christ comes to Elizabeth through Mary. And then both women rejoice! Some have called this visitation a “Eucharistic” moment. Can you see that connection?
3. God asked a lot of Mary and Elizabeth. Can you give an example of where God asked a lot of you (or a member of your family)?

## APPLICATION

Mary’s one desire is to go out in loving service to help her pregnant cousin. Mary’s greatness is her fidelity to God’s Word and her cooperation with his plan. Both women, are literally, expecting miracles. Both women are cooperating with God in the miracle He desires for them. Both women believe - trust - that what God desires of and for them will bring them new joy.

And what is their response? Great expectation even in the unknowing; gratitude that leads to generosity; love they cannot wait to share. We are given this passage from Scripture in the final days of Advent as our final preparation for Christmas.

- o Where are you in your journey to expecting a miracle? Do you believe in them? Are you open to cooperating with God? Have you talked more to God to share the desires of your heart and to hear and see the joy he desires for you?

Close with the Expecting Miracles prayer with this in mind for the final days of Advent:

*Lord, as Christmas draws ever closer, free me from being self-absorbed and self-centred. Instead fill me with eagerness and generosity of heart. Like Mary, may I too go out in loving service of others. Like Elizabeth, and John, help me to recognize you are near, to believe in you, and experience your Love leaping up in me.*

### A Prayer for Advent

Heavenly Father,  
In this Advent of expectation  
draw us together in unity,  
that our praise and worship  
might echo in these walls  
and also through our lives.

In this Advent of expectation  
draw us together in mission,  
that the hope within  
might be the song we sing,  
and the melody of our lives.

In this Advent of expectation  
draw us together in service,  
that the path we follow  
might lead us from a stable  
to a glimpse of eternity.

In this Advent of expectation  
draw us closer to you,  
that we may hear your voice,  
and see with the eyes of faith  
the miracle you desire for us.  
Amen