

twelvebaskets

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ADVENT 4C

22nd December 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Holy God,
Come and make yourself known to me,
As you did in the first Christmas.

Creator of heaven and earth,
Author of my salvation,
my comfort and my strength,
Today I pause for a moment to thank you for all the good gifts you have bestowed upon me.

Today, I sing your praise and offer my thoughts, reflections and time to join with the angels to proclaim that you are good and your love endures forever.

Forgive me when I turn my face from you,
Encourage me when I step out in faith to follow you,
And guide me as I seek to build your kingdom here and now.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Readings: Luke 1:39-55 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

Twelvebaskets has put together some video resources for The Methodist Church's Christmas campaign – Hush the Noise. You can find these via the links on the Methodist Church resources and you might like to watch the video for Advent 4, reflecting on the same reading as today - methodist.org.uk/for-churches/christmasresources/

In Luke's telling of today's gospel story, Mary's song is her response to the news that she would bear God's child Jesus and to her visit to her cousin Elizabeth who declared, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus.'

Pause for a moment just to reflect on all the thoughts and emotions that must have been whirling through both of their minds. Their pregnancies are unexpected – thought impossible – and the way their lives will change cannot be imagined. But their response is to praise God.

When Methodist Minister, Rev Neville Ward, wrote his book about praying the Rosary, *Five for sorrow, ten for joy*, he commented that 'in Methodism the silence about the mother of Jesus is positively deafening.' I wonder what your experience has been in churches you've been part of? Have you heard many sermons about Mary? Or thought about her in Bible studies? Perhaps like the Magnificat itself, we only consider Mary briefly as we approach Christmas. But does Mary have something to teach us?

Mary rejoices in what God has done: she praises God for keeping the promise to her ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants for ever. When we come to worship, we too praise God for all that God has done from the beginning of time until now. God never

forgets us, even when we are wayward, and God's promise lasts for ever. Like Mary, we can – and we should – praise God for that.

Mary's praise of God is also personal: God is *her* Saviour who has looked upon *her* in her lowliness. God has done great things *for her*. As we come to worship, we come to a God who knows us as we are and who is our Saviour. We come to a God who has done great things for us. We come in humility, thankfulness and praise.

Mary's song of praise does not forget the realities of the world where injustice is real and many suffer. She knew of the suffering of the poor, of those who went hungry, of people who were oppressed by powerful rulers and much more. She sang of the God who stands against all of this and who will overthrow it.

As we come to her song 2000 years later, our world is vastly different in so many ways, but we are still in a world where division and injustice is real: rich, poor; full, hungry; powerful, lowly. These are all realities we still know today and which need to be overthrown.

How are praise and protest connected for you? How does your praise for God create spaces for you to protest against injustice? How does your anger against injustice draw you back to God?

Hymn/Song:

191 STF – Away in a manger – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Whatever it is that you bring,
Whatever your gifts,
May you find the courage to bring them to the manger-side this Christmas season.
May you be inspired by the miracle of God with us, Immanuel, whatever your Christmas looks like,
And may you be blessed.
Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers

Monday 23rd December

- You might simply like to use the mantra 'O Come, O Come, Immanuel' as you go about your day, today. Notice that God is present, always, and closer than you maybe often realise.

Tuesday 24th December

- Today is a precious day, a final day of waiting, of preparing, of anticipation.
- It's often a day that gets lost to busyness and stress though, so our simple encouragement for today is to find a moment, even just a 3-minute-long moment, where you can be still.
- Sit, put your feet up, close your eyes, and listen to what it is you think God might be saying to you today.

Wednesday 25th December – Christmas Day!

- Christ is here! The incarnation is happening, all around us, and today is the day we celebrate that story.
- It is not always an easy day for people, littered as it is with memories and absences, and perhaps with current stress and darkness.
- How will the presence of the Christ change and transform you this Christmas day? Can you bring a moment of Immanuel-light into someone else's day?

Thursday 26th December

- On this second day of Christmas, 'Boxing Day', many countries have traditions of giving gifts to those in need – it may be that the name of the day comes from the 'alms box' that would stand in churches for gifts to the poor (though this etymology is contested).
- Today, there are many people living in poverty in our world, and it is likely there will be some in your local community or at least the nearest town. What support networks are in place for them, and are there things you could do to help?
- As you pray into issues around poverty and injustice, you might like to look up the work of local charities responding to issues around debt, homelessness, poverty and other issues you are aware of in your local area. Pray for them too, and the work they are doing to respond.

Friday 27th December

- Living God, on the third day of Christmas,
I pray for all who feel isolated in the communities and towns around me.
I pray for those in my own family or networks who may be feeling the effects of loneliness during this winter season.
God of love, show me how to be an answer to my own prayer – how to pick up the phone, or make a visit,
In Jesus, name, Amen.

Saturday 28th December

- When you have chance today, head outside and look at the sky (ideally not when it's pouring with rain!). Take note of the clouds, of the speed they are moving, of the light the sun is casting, perhaps you can see the moon or some stars if it is after sunset.
- Under the vastness of the open sky, reflect on how far away the clouds are, and how much further the sun and the stars are...
- As you look at the huge expanse of the horizon, think about how much bigger our Creator is, how the God we worship knows each one of us and yet is also holding the whole universe together.
- You may wish to give thanks for the amazing universe you get to be a part of.