

Week 4: Love

Opening prayer

Loving God,
fill us with your Spirit
and inspire us in lives of service,
open to your love
and emboldened by the knowledge
that nothing is impossible with you. Amen.
(Light the fourth candle in your Advent wreath)

Scripture (Luke 1:26-38)

At that time: The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered 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 called holy – the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Reflection

When the angel Gabriel delivers his message to Mary, she is unsurprisingly taken aback. She wonders how these things will happen to her.

We each have moments when we lose confidence. When we reach our limits, where we feel weak, vulnerable or afraid. When something we are facing feels impossible.

The angel reminds Mary that nothing is impossible with God. She will bear God's son. In turn, Mary calls herself "the servant of the Lord." She opens herself to God's Spirit and the possibilities it brings to her life.

How receptive are we to welcoming God into our lives? Are we ready to be filled with God's love and to help make that love present in our world? If, like Mary, we are alive to God's Spirit working in us and through us, we too can achieve wonderful things.

For discussion

- + Where do you see God's love at work in our world?
- + Who are those who deliver God's message to you? Are you willing, like Mary, to listen and respond?
- + Shortly we will celebrate Christ's birth. Jesus is born in a stable, in poverty. How does that impact our celebration of Christmas?

Closing prayer

We listen to your word
as it whispers in our hearts:
"Do not be afraid."

Come, Lord, Bearer of Love.

Open our hearts to one another
especially those who are poor,
vulnerable or marginalised.

Come, Lord, Bearer of Love.

Lead us in your ways,
as together we make a change
and share your love with others.

Come, Lord, Bearer of Love.