

Advent 4 - December 19, 2021

Godly Play Advent 4 Candle lighting <https://youtu.be/X94ZEdrC7a0>

Story

Mary Remembers Her Song

Based on Luke 1:39–55 and Luke 2:6–20

It was very quiet in the stable. Mary and Joseph sat very close together and looked at their baby snuggled in Mary's arms. "Hello, Jesus," Joseph whispered. "We're glad you are here." Mary began to rock the baby very gently and she hummed a quiet song. As she hummed her song, Mary remembered her visit to her friend Elizabeth. Mary remembered that she had felt so happy that she had sung a song to God. She sang her song again, in a soft voice to baby Jesus.

My heart praises God,
peace and joy.
God remembers me,
peace and joy.
I feel blessed by God,
peace and joy.
Oh – peace and joy.

On a hillside nearby, shepherds were gathered around a fire, talking to each other. They had been looking after their sheep. Now it was time to rest. It was very dark, with only the stars, moon, and their fires to provide light. Suddenly, the sky became bright. The shepherds jumped to their feet. An angel spoke to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here to tell you good news. Tonight in Bethlehem, a baby was born. A special baby. You will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Then an angel choir began to sing. All around, the sky was filled with light and beautiful music.

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem. They were filled with love when they saw the baby. They heard Mary singing her song softly, and they began to sing with her.

My heart praises God,
peace and joy.
God remembers me,
peace and joy.
I feel blessed by God,
peace and joy.
Oh – peace and joy.

The Shepherds knew in their hearts that Jesus was God's promised One, who would share God's love with everyone. Joseph rocked the baby gently, while everyone sang Mary's song.

Questions for thought (teens and adults)

Families are complicated. Sometimes, when life changes unexpectedly, different family members interpret the change in very different ways. Think of a time something in your family changed. It could have been a birth, a marriage, a new job, a death, or something else that shook things up for you.

- What was the change, and how did you react to it?
- How did other people in your family react to this change? people outside the family?
- What helps you to welcome changes into your life? What makes it harder?

Luke 1:39–55 describes Elizabeth as “filled with the Holy Spirit” when her child leaps within her at Mary’s approach. Later, Mary says, “My soul magnifies the Most High, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”

- Luke is the only gospel writer who uses the term “Holy Spirit.” What experience do you think Luke is trying to capture in this text?
- What does it mean for someone’s spirit to rejoice in God? And does it say something different when the person, like Mary, is facing unexpected challenges?
- What connection do you see between Elizabeth’s experience of unplanned pregnancy and Mary’s? What connection do you see between the two unborn children?

Mary’s song is not just a description of her individual experience. It celebrates what God has done “from generation to generation,” including reversing expectations by having “filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.”

- What is the connection between Mary’s experience and the experience of her people?
- Why do you think so much of Mary’s song describes a reversal of societal structures?

Craft

Christingle candles

You will need oranges, candles, toothpicks, cranberries, raisins, cloves, apple corer or knife

Directions

The tradition of making Christingle candles is practiced in many churches in the United Kingdom, with the orange symbolizing the world, the decorative elements representing the fruits of the earth, and the candle representing Jesus as the light of the world. Four separate toothpicks with dried fruit may be placed on the orange to symbolize the four seasons. In creating and using this candle, we provide ourselves with a way to focus on the gift of Jesus’ birth this season.

1. Use an apple corer or knife to create a hole at the top of the orange that a candle may be placed in. If needed, slice the bottom of the orange to make a flat base so the orange will not roll or tilt.
2. Decorate the orange by pushing cloves into it or use the toothpicks to attach cranberries/raisins to the orange.
3. Place the candle in the hole at the top of the orange.
4. Use the Christingle candle on your table when you share dinner on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day