

Mary  
Sunday  
Week Four  
Attend Sunday Gathering

Monday  
Week Four

Read: Luke 1v26-38



Chris Renzema, wrote a song called Mary & Joseph paints such a human and vulnerable picture of Mary...

“Well, Mary, Mary  
Did you ever think you'd carry  
The weight of the world  
And the hands that formed it  
Hardly more than a child yourself  
You'll need a little help...

So, Mary, Mary  
The day your getting married  
And this isn't what you dreamed of  
Walking down the aisle at eight months  
They'll never understand  
That this isn't what you planned”

The lyrics bring Mary into focus—not as the serene, perfect, glowing figure we often see in nativity sets but as a real teenage girl from Nazareth. They let us imagine her stepping out of that hay-filled manger and sitting down at your kitchen table. You can see her for who she was: young, ordinary, and yet chosen by God.

When the angel appeared to her, he called her “highly favored.” But Mary didn’t respond with confidence or joy—she was troubled. Confused. She asked the simplest, most human question: How can this be? The angel explained, and that was it. No arguing, no running away. Just her quiet, remarkable response – let it be so.

Think about that for a moment. Mary, barely more than a child, faced a reality that would have turned her world upside down. Today, an unplanned pregnancy might bring uncertainty, but in Mary’s time, it carried the weight of scandal, shame, and potentially even death. Her trust in God didn’t erase the risks or the questions. Yet she surrendered anyway.

The painting above, *The Annunciation*, by African-American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner, is profound in the depth of emotion it conveys, the rawness. Mary is not the polished, idealized figure we often see in traditional depictions. Instead, she sits in a vulnerable posture, reminiscent of a child waking in the middle of the night, startled and unsure. This portrayal invites us to see Mary not as a distant, untouchable icon but as a real, relatable person—someone who felt fear, uncertainty, and vulnerability, yet still chose to say “yes.”

The beauty of the Christmas story is that God didn’t just stay distant, working through grand, untouchable gestures. He came to us, fully human, born to a vulnerable girl in a forgotten corner of the world. A God who chose to enter our mess and walk alongside us—a God who sees us, knows us, and says, You’re not alone.

God with us. Flesh and blood. The infinite reaching out to the finite, bringing the weight of heaven and earth touching to a young girl’s arms.

### Listen

Mary & Joseph - Chris Renzema

Mary, Did you Know? - Maverick City Music

Mary Consoles Eve - Rain for Roots

## Reflect

*What part of this song stood out to you? How do you picture Mary?*

*How have you experienced the weight of God's love for you through Jesus?*

*What are you hoping for this Christmas?*

*How are you preparing for the not yet of Jesus' return?*

Tuesday  
Week Four

Christmas Eve Gathering

## Christmas Eve Centering Prayer

On this holy night, as we await the celebration of Christ's birth, take a moment to pause, breathe, and center yourself in the presence of God.

Ask God to reveal a word or phrase that reflects the meaning of Christmas for you tonight. Consider words like Emmanuel, Light, Hope, Love, Holy, or Abba. This word will symbolize your intention to open your heart to God's presence.

Set a timer for 5-20 minutes. This time is a sacred offering to God, a moment of stillness amidst the busyness of Christmas Eve.

Light a candle, turn the lights down.

Sit comfortably, with your back straight and your feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, releasing the cares and noise of the day. Silently introduce your sacred word as your way of welcoming God's presence.

As thoughts, emotions, or distractions arise—and they will—simply return gently to your sacred word.

Don't judge your thoughts or try to push them away. Instead, allow them to pass like clouds in the sky, and bring your focus back to your word.

When the timer ends, remain in silence for a couple more minutes, resting in God's love. You may choose to end by reciting the Lord's Prayer, thanking God for the gift of Jesus on this night of waiting and wonder.

During your prayer, reflect on the humility of Christ's birth and the joy of His coming. Let this prayer prepare your heart to celebrate the mystery of Emmanuel—God with us.

## Liturgy

*O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen*

## Listen

Silent Night - Page CXVII



Wednesday  
Week Four  
Christmas Day

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9v6-7

Reflection:

*You were young—barely more than a girl—when everything you knew was turned upside down. The future you had imagined, one of quiet faithfulness and simplicity, was shattered in an instant. You weren't prepared for the weight of it all, for the world you thought you understood to suddenly feel so foreign.*

*When the angel came, his words were a strange echo that felt both distant and all-consuming. "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." At first, fear gripped you so tightly you could hardly breathe. You were a young woman, still so innocent, still dreaming of a life with Joseph—a life you had imagined for years. And now this—an angel with a message so impossible, so beyond anything you could have imagined. You were chosen.*

*"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. His kingdom will never end."*

*You were afraid. Terrified, even. The thought of being pregnant, of carrying a child—how could you possibly explain this to Joseph? To your parents? To your people? This is not how the Messiah was supposed to come. He was supposed to come on a high horse with all the glory. You were a young woman, not ready for such a responsibility, for the whispers that would follow you, for the judgment that would come. You weren't ready for the stares, the questions, the pain of being misunderstood, of becoming the center of a scandal that no one would ever forget.*

*Pregnancy itself was terrifying, a constant reminder of the life growing inside you, a life that would change everything. Your body, once so familiar to you, was now a strange vessel. Your thoughts spiraled—how could you be ready? How could anyone be ready for this?*

*But as you wrestled with fear and confusion, something deep within you stirred—a quiet, trust in the One who had called you. “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me according to your word.”*

*In that moment, you let go of everything you had planned, everything you thought you knew. You said yes—not just to the child, but to the unknown, to the terrifying beauty of God’s plan. You didn’t understand it all, and that fear didn’t vanish, but somehow, in your surrender, you found a peace that you couldn’t explain.*

*The days that followed were full of uncertainty, of alienation. You hid away, not from shame, but from the weight of the secret you carried—both the child and the calling you had been given. You felt isolated, as though no one could understand the depth of what you were carrying. Your growing belly was a reminder of what the world might never understand, the mysterious love you were called to bring into the world.*

*And yet, even as you felt the loneliness of it all, you held fast to the promise. God’s love was there, even in the alienation. Even when others judged you, even when you were left with nothing but uncertainty, His love wrapped you in a way that nothing else could.*

*The moment you gave birth to Him—a child, the Savior—everything you feared, everything you had doubted, fell away. The ache of pregnancy, the loneliness, the shame—it all faded into the glory of that moment. You held Him in your arms, this tiny child, and in that moment, you knew that every bit of fear, every bit of confusion had been worth it. This was love made flesh, the hope of the world, and you clung tightly*

Listen

This is the Christ - Sandra McCracken