



Advent 4

Rev Linda Murphy
Year C, Advent 4
21 December 2025

As we get closer to Christmas, many of us are busy finishing our working year and preparing for our holiday. This fourth Sunday of Advent and our reading from Matthew today asks us to embrace the transformative power of love, inspiring us to reflect on the profound significance of Christ's birth. It serves as a poignant reminder that, amidst the complexities and challenges of life, there exists a transcendent love that surpasses all human understanding, offering solace and restoration to weary souls.

Only Matthew and Luke document the birth narrative. Matthew intentionally uses scandal, not as moral failure, but as a theological disruption of assumed power, authority, and righteousness that introduces this gospel. What does righteousness look like when God's work disrupts certainty rather than resolves it? Matthew's answer is not abstract or triumphant. It is embodied in Joseph who quietly, obediently, and at real personal cost, alters his plan to trust in the movement of God.

We witness a pivotal moment in the story of Jesus's birth in this gospel. Joseph, being betrothed to Mary, discovers

that she is pregnant. However, instead of reacting in anger or disbelief, Joseph listens to the message sent to him in a dream by an angel, which reveals that Mary's pregnancy is a result of the Holy Spirit. This moment not only highlights Joseph's faith and obedience to God but also highlights the miraculous nature of Jesus's conception. Joseph fulfils the prophecy spoken of in the Old Testament and plays a crucial role in the fulfilling of God's plan for salvation by choosing to believe in Mary's divine pregnancy.

This gospel invites us to reflect on the power of faith and trust in God's plan. It challenges us to consider how we respond when things do not go as expected and when faced with challenging situations. Just like Joseph, we are called to have faith in God's guidance and timing, even when things seem impossible or beyond our understanding. Joseph's obedience and acceptance of Mary's miraculous pregnancy set the stage for Jesus's birth, emphasizing the importance of being open to God's will and ready to fulfil our part in God's grand plan. So, let us take inspiration from Joseph's example and be willing to trust in God's plan for our lives, even when it seems unconventional or difficult to comprehend.

Joseph's character is central to this narrative. He is depicted as a man of integrity who, despite his confusion and hurt, chooses compassion over condemnation. In the time that Joseph is faced with this inconvenient situation it would have been expected that he would abandon Mary by the social structures of the day. However, he chooses to accept the angels' message in his dream. The dream reassures Joseph that Mary's pregnancy is divinely ordained and instructs him to take Mary as his wife. Joseph's obedience to the angel's message highlights his faithfulness and trust in God's plan, even when it

challenges societal norms and personal expectations. Joseph never utters a word in Matthew and he is never referred to again in the Gospel.

Our reading emphasizes the miraculous nature of Jesus' conception, affirming his identity as the Son of God. The angel instructs Joseph to name the child Jesus, which means "He will save His people from their sins", underscoring Jesus' mission as the Saviour. Furthermore, the narrative fulfils the prophecy from Isaiah regarding the virgin birth, reinforcing the continuity of God's redemptive plan throughout Scripture.

Our Gospel invites us to reflect on the nature of faith and obedience. Joseph's willingness to accept God's plan without question. Despite the potential for personal and social repercussions. This serves as a model for believers. This reading encourages trust in divine guidance, especially in challenging circumstances, and highlights the importance of being open to God's will.

This foundational text in the Christian narrative, illustrating the miraculous birth of Jesus and the pivotal role of Joseph. It emphasises themes of faith, obedience, and the fulfilment of prophecy, inviting us to trust in God's plans and recognise the significance of Jesus' mission as the Saviour of humanity.

This passage serves as a powerful reminder of God's presence and intervention in the world, as well as the transformative power of faith in the lives of individuals.

This last week at Te Tāpui Atawhai we have been surrounded with angels helping receive presents and distributing them. They have been on Hobson St, in the carpark, at Wesley Community Centre in Mt Roskill and at MUMA and Papakura Marae. This last week has seen three thousand food parcels being distributed to families in need and thirty thousand presents have gone to Tamariki and whānau. Nga mihi Auckland we cannot do this mahi

without your generosity. Our teams have been remarkably busy giving food and presents to their whānau and helping with the busyness at Wesley Community Centre. The Mission Grocer has been distributing food parcels and presents on Federal St with amazing efficiency.

There are angels everywhere this Christmas.

Amen.