

Sermon for the Fourth Sunday in Advent

'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.'

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The God and Father of our ancestors promised of old, *'You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are least among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth from me one who is to be the ruler of Israel.'*

For we, who are rebellious, need a ruler, yet there is not one among us that can rule in wisdom and in truth. This the Lord has known; so it is His desire to give to His people a ruler.

The God and Father of our ancestors promised of old, *'When she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of God's people shall return.'* *'And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.'*

For we, who are lost, need a shepherd, yet there is not one among us to shepherd us. This the Lord has known; so it is His desire to give to His people a shepherd.

The God and Father of our ancestors promised of old: *'I will raise up a prophet from among thy brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth. And he shall speak all that the LORD commanded of him.'*

For we, who are blind, need a prophet, yet there is not one among us to speak to us the consolation of the Father. This the Lord has known; so it is His desire to give to His people a prophet.

The God and Father of our ancestors promised of old, *'A child will be born unto us, a son given unto us: and dominion shall be upon his shoulder.'* *'For on the throne of David shall his kingdom be established.'*

For we, who are lawless, need a king, yet there is not one among us to reign in majesty. This the Lord has known; so it is His desire to give to His people a king.

The God and Father of our ancestors promised of old, *'Truly, the Lord will build His own temple, and he shall bear the glory and dwell upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon the throne: and the counsel of peace shall be within him.'*

For we, who are sinful, need a priest, yet there is not one to purge our flesh by the blood of sacrifice. This the Lord has known; so it is His desire to give to His people a priest.

The God and Father of our ancestors promised of old, *'On the mount of God, the LORD will provide the sacrifice.'*

For we, who are damned, need a sacrifice, yet there is not one among us who is blameless and without spot. This the Lord has known; so it is His desire to give to His people the sacrifice.

'Hath the Lord said, but will not act? Hath he spoken, but will not fulfill?' 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither a son of man, that he should repent.'

The Lord shall keep his word. *'For he hath remembered his covenant forever, the promise he commanded for a thousand generations.'*

Holy Mary asks: *'How shall this be?'* And the Lord said: *'Behold, you shall conceive, and bear a son.'*

Holy Elizabeth asks: *'Why is this granted to me?'* And the Lord said: *'In this manner have I loved the world.'*

Holy John asks: *'Is this the one that is to come?'* And the Lord said: *'Behold your God, the LORD of angels.'*

Holy Mary conceives a child. Holy Elizabeth rejoices. Holy John leaps for joy within his mother's womb.

Now the Lord speaks to this one within Mary, yet unborn, and says: *'I delight not in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, nor do I desire burnt offerings. But obedience is better than sacrifice, to hearken to my word better than the flesh of lambs.'* *'Therefore keep my commandments, and live; write them upon the table of thy*

heart.'

The unborn Christ replies:

'A body you have prepared for me. Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Micah 5:2-5; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45.