

## Introduction to the Readings

As we near the celebration of Christmas, the 4th Sunday of Advent invites us to focus on the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation through His Son. The readings highlight the themes of anticipation, preparation, and joyful obedience.

**The prophet Micah (5:1-4a)** foretells the *humble origins of the Messiah*, born in Bethlehem, who will shepherd God's people with strength and peace.

**Psalm 80** echoes the plea for God's restoration and guidance, calling upon the Lord to "come to save us."

**In Hebrews (10:5-10)**, we hear of Christ's mission of obedience to the Father's will, offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice to establish a new covenant.

Finally, **Luke's Gospel (1:39-45)** recounts the visitation of Mary and Elizabeth, a moment of profound joy and recognition of God's work in their lives, as the unborn John leaps in Elizabeth's womb at the presence of Christ.

Imagine planning a celebration for a long-awaited guest of honor. The first step is recognizing the guest's importance and preparing a place for them (Micah's prophecy of the Messiah). Then, there's the anticipation, calling for everything to be made ready (the plea of Psalm 80). The guest's arrival requires someone to make a significant sacrifice or act of love to ensure the celebration's success (Christ's obedience in Hebrews). Finally, when the guest arrives, the joy and recognition of their presence bring fulfillment to the waiting and preparation (Mary's visitation to Elizabeth in Luke).

In the same way, these readings show us the stages of God's redemptive plan: the promise of salvation, the longing for restoration, the obedience of Christ, and the joy of His imminent presence among us.