

## Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 19 Mi 5: 1- 4a; Heb 10:5- 10; Lk 1:39- 45

We've all heard the phrase "great things come in small packages", and our readings echo that today. From our first reading calling out that our Savior will come from the tiny community of Bethlehem to the Gospel sharing the announcement of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist – the first of two babies who will change the world. This last Sunday in Advent as we round the bend in our madcap race to get ready for Christmas, we're reminded that the best things are small: the kind word, the anonymous gesture, a smile to a stranger. Our world looks different now – our lives filled with masks, distance, and fear for our health and the health of our loved ones. Many of us have experienced great loss in the last two years: loss of loved ones, jobs, and our physical and mental wellbeing. Christmas for many of us pre-pandemic meant the hunt for the best gift, hosting the best party, seeing and doing all of the holiday things to maximize the season. However, we are reminded today – and we have been reminded over the last two Christmas seasons – that it's the time together, not the possessions or activities, that is the real gift. Christ came to us in the smallest of ways, as a baby born in a manger. We are reminded today that the greatest joys and blessings in life come in the small things. Many of us have been unable to reunite with family and friends until a few months ago. My family was able to spend the holidays together again this year. It was an immeasurable blessing to be in the same room with so many people I love, and to share a meal, stories, memories, and to just back in each other's company. That is the true gift of Christmas – remembering that love is at the center of it all. God's love for us that He sent His Son into the world. Mary's faith to say "Yes" and her everlasting love for her Son. It is Christ's love for us that he gave His life for our Salvation. As we meditate on the reason for Christmas this Sunday, let us be reminded that the gifts, parties, outfits, meals, and activities aren't what counts, but rather the people around us and the love that unites us.

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