

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 24, 2023

## Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26-38

*Pray, and let God worry. —Martin Luther*

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**A**lmost 40 years ago, songwriter Mark Lowry scribbled down some lyrics for a Christmas song about Mary. After all, people were singing carols about the angels, the shepherds, and of course about the baby Jesus born on this holy and silent night. But few carols paid homage to the teenage girl who gave birth 2,000 years ago in the little town of Bethlehem, Judea.

The song that Lowry wrote reached Number 6 on CCM Magazine's Adult Contemporary Chart. At the time, Lowry was with the Gaither Vocal Band, and he himself recorded his song on their 1998 Christmas album, *Still the Greatest Story Ever Told*. Today, the song has become a modern Christmas classic, recorded by hundreds of artists over the years, and different versions have periodically reached the top 10 in the Billboard R&B and Holiday charts.

His song consists of questions.

*Mary, did you know  
That your baby boy will one day walk on water?  
Mary, did you know  
That your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?  
Did you know  
That your baby boy has come to make you new?  
This child that you've delivered  
Will soon deliver you?*

Let's answer Lowry's questions.

No, Mary didn't know.

She was clueless. She was young. "How can this be?" she asks in verse 34 of our reading. Later, there were many things she would "ponder" in her heart. She didn't know what it would be like having to raise a boy who was always going about "his Father's business." She didn't know what it would be like to watch him suffer and die.

We don't know everything either, do we? We can't know what lies past this Christmas Eve Sunday. But Mary was a woman of faith: "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

This is a good verse for us to take with us into 2024.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, today you are a baby in a manger. You will grow to be the Savior of the world. And you will be raised in triumph and glory! I worship and bow before you. Amen.*



**Daily Bible Readings**

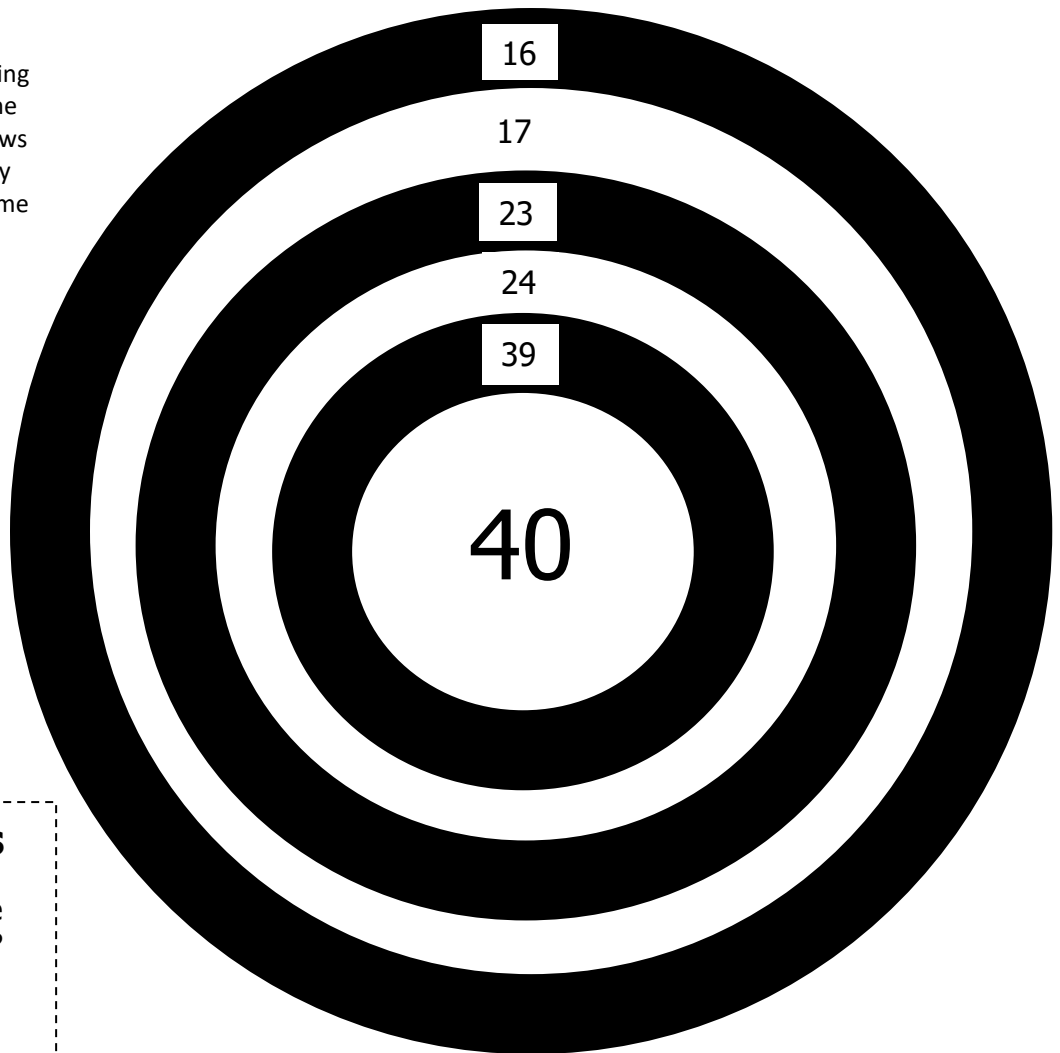
- Sunday:** Ecclesiastes 7-10
- Monday:** Song of Solomon 1-2
- Tuesday:** Song of Solomon 3
- Wednesday:** Revelation 19
- Thursday:** Revelation 20
- Friday:** Revelation 21
- Saturday:** Revelation 22

**VERSE TO REMEMBER**

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. —Isaiah 7:14*

**TARGET PRACTICE**

Robin Hood is having trouble shooting his arrows into this target so that the total is exactly 100. How many arrows will he need to shoot? HINT: He may need to shoot his arrow into the same ring more than once!



**Word Pictures**

What phrases do these word pictures suggest?

*Once*  
**TIME**

**EATING**  
**Run**

**Answer to Word Pictures:**  
Once upon a time; Eating on the run.

**Answer to Target Practice:**  
Six arrows, 16, 16, 17, 17, 17, 17.