

This fourth week of Advent is all about love—not just the kind of love we see in cards or movies, but the kind that keeps us close to God and to each other. God's love never gives up. It remembers, forgives, and helps us be brave and kind. In today's story, Zechariah moves from being quiet to singing a blessing. His song reminds us that love is not just a feeling, it's a promise that sets people free and helps them find peace.

Imagine playing charades without being allowed to use your hands or face, or even move your body. You have something to share, but no way to show it. That's a little like what happened to Zechariah.

Zechariah was a priest who lost his voice after doubting an angel's message that he and his wife would have a baby. For months, he couldn't speak: not when he saw his wife's belly grow, or even when their baby arrived. But as soon as he wrote down their baby's name, "John," his voice returned. And the very first thing he did was sing.

Zechariah's song wasn't quiet or small. It was bursting with praise. He sang about a God who keeps promises, who brings light into dark places, and who guides us into peace. Zechariah had been quiet for a long time. But when he spoke again, his words were full of love and hope—not just for his son but for the world.

That's what love does: it tells the truth. It brings light. Love remembers the people others forget. It makes the world a little softer and safer. Zechariah didn't sing because everything was easy or perfect. He sang because even after all the waiting and wondering, he trusted that God's love was still leading the way.

Love might not always feel big or loud. Sometimes it looks like listening, standing up for someone else, or showing up even when we're nervous. But real love makes a way where there wasn't one before.

As we get ready for Christmas, we remember that God's love shows up for everyone.

Advent invites us to make space for love to speak, to shine, and to heal. That's how we get ready for Jesus, whose love sets people free.

Questions

1. What might it have felt like for Zechariah to finally speak after being silent for so long?
2. How can your voice help someone feel seen and loved today?
3. What does real love look or sound like to you?

DREAM IT. LIVE IT.

These practices—Embodiment, Advocacy, and Joy—are woven throughout these resources, like the Advent Calendar. Returning to them helps build spiritual habits that ground us, strengthen us, and keep us connected to God's dream—even when life feels hard.

Embodiment Practice

OUR BODIES ARE PART OF HOW WE LIVE GOD'S DREAM—THESE PRACTICES HELP US SLOW DOWN, LISTEN, AND BE PRESENT TO WHAT WE BELIEVE.

Your heart is always beating and sending life through your whole body. Love works like that, too—it starts inside you and spreads out all around. Put your fingers on your wrist or your neck. Even if you can't feel your heartbeat, it's still there. Take a few slow breaths. As your heart beats, imagine God's love moving through you. Now think about that love spreading into all of the places you go—your home, your school, your playground, and your neighborhood. You can even think of people or places that need love right now. With each beat, whisper a little prayer: “*Love, be here.*” You can try this whenever you notice your heartbeat—when you're running, getting ready for bed, or when you feel worried. Let your heartbeat remind you that God's love is always with you and can flow out to others.

Joy Practice

JOY IS PART OF HOW WE LIVE GOD'S DREAM—THESE PRACTICES HELP US CELEBRATE, CREATE, AND REMEMBER THAT DELIGHT AND HOPE ARE SACRED, TOO.

Get a box of individually wrapped candy canes. Using a glue gun or glue dots, attach two candy canes together to form the shape of a heart. Once the glue has dried, tie a piece of string at the top of each heart so it can be easily hung or carried. Now, share them with others—hang one on a neighbor's doorknob, offer one to the barista at your favorite coffee shop, or hand one to the cashier at the grocery store. There's no need for a long explanation; just offer it as a simple gesture of love. Then, notice the joy that lights up the face of the person receiving it.

Prayer

Loving God, like a parent with a child, you cradle us in your strong, steady love and remind us we are enough. May we carry this truth wherever we go, so all may feel the warmth of your love. Amen.

Advocacy Practice

WORKING FOR JUSTICE IS PART OF HOW WE LIVE GOD'S DREAM—THESE PRACTICES HELP US NOTICE WHAT'S UNFAIR AND TAKE LOVING ACTION TO HELP MAKE THINGS RIGHT.

Zechariah's song reminds us that love is never just private sentiment—it is a public witness that challenges the powers and makes peace possible. Our advocacy begins in the same way, by taking what we have experienced and turning it into public witness.

During Advent, many of us have shared or received gifts of food, clothing, shelter, or care. Others have seen love show up in their neighbors, community, or church.

As a family, reflect on those stories of real love, then turn those stories into public advocacy by sending holiday cards to your local political representatives with a note that says, “This season I saw love show up through food, shelter, care, or kindness. But people should not have to depend on luck, charity, and private giving. We need just policies so everyone has what they need to live in safety and dignity.” Children can draw pictures, while adults write short notes naming the change they want to see.

