

# The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023

## Quaking at the Sight

by Scott Stoner

*Silent night, holy night.  
Shepherds quake at the sight.  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly hosts sing, Alleluia!  
Christ, the Savior is born!*  
—Joseph Mohr, *Silent Night*

Today is unique because it is both the Fourth Sunday of Advent *and* it's Christmas Eve. Churches will hold services in the morning to conclude the observance of Advent, and then afternoon and evening services to celebrate the birth of Jesus. What a rich and glorious day it is!

Singing *Silent Night* by candlelight is a memorable part of many Christmas Eve services. I have always loved the words from the second verse where it describes how the shepherds were “quaking at the sight” because of all that they were experiencing. To quake is to vibrate; the shepherds were no doubt vibrating with curiosity, awe, and wonder at the news of Jesus’ birth.

This morning and evening vibrate, too, with the wonder of God as made manifest in Mary’s faith and courage described in Luke, the birth of Jesus, and the reverent response of the shepherds. The vibrations of what transpired almost two thousand years continue to be felt throughout the world today. On this holy night, may we continue to quake at the sight.

**Making It Personal:** Do you have special memories or traditions related to Christmas Eve that have filled you with wonder, so as to even make you quake? Are there any traditions that you would like to change or renew this year?

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# Christmas Day

December 25, 2023

## Receiving the Gift

by Robbin and Scott

*And wonders of His love,  
and wonders of His love,  
and wonders, wonders of His love.*

—Isaac Watts, *Joy to the World*

**M**erry Christmas! May you be filled with the wonder of the good news of Jesus' birth. May you be filled today and every day with the "wonders of His love."

We are so grateful for the path we have traveled together through Advent. In the first week, we focused on the connection between wonder and love. In week two, we concentrated on the power of stories to convey wonder, and that there is no better story to capture the presence of God's love in the world than the story of Jesus' birth. And this last week, we focused on how thin places help us to feel the nearness of God.

A story is told of a children's Christmas Pageant where the young boy playing the role of the innkeeper said something quite memorable off script. At the point in the pageant when Mary and Joseph came to the innkeeper to ask if there is room for them in the inn, the boy paused for a long time and finally said, "Yes, somehow I will find a way to make room for you."

The surprised congregation and other parent participants tried to move on as though nothing was wrong, as they assumed the frightened child had forgotten his lines. Asked later about his response, he said, "It just didn't feel right to say no and I just couldn't bring myself to say there was no room for Jesus in the inn—even if that was what the script said!"

