

# THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

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Today is Wednesday, December 11 and this is the second week of the season of Advent. We are studying the song of Zechariah recorded in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Blessed and Holy Lord, my heart is full of hope this Advent season as I anticipate the celebration of the birth of Your Son, my Savior, Jesus Christ. In the early morning of a dawning December day, I seek Your presence. I calm my thoughts, still my mind and reflect on the words of the priest Zechariah, whose journey of silence became a journey of faith. Let me hear the message you have for me today through the words of this ancient song. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him. His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. Luke 1:62-67***

## REFLECTION

In the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, we meet the priest Zechariah and see him transform and grow in faith. Between verses eight and eighty, a nine month period of time, something happens to Zechariah, he makes a journey in silence. A nine month long journey with God. In the beginning Zechariah is somewhat of a negative, skeptical, bah-humbug, grump going about his priestly duties. The angel Gabriel promises him amazing joy and the answer to his most earnest prayer and he merely responds with disbelief. Because of his doubt, the angel takes away his ability to speak.

After a nine month journey of silence, Zechariah utters his first words. He agrees the newborn baby's name is John and he breaks out into song. A song of praise. A song of faith. Zechariah is transformed. He is energized. He bubbles with joy. He leaps off the page of scripture. He sings. He shouts. He dances. He praises God for what He has done.

A nine month journey of silence changed a bah-humbug, know-it-all, skeptical, grinchy, grump into a humble, faith-filled, grateful, joyful servant of God. The season of Advent is that kind of journey for us too. God invites us on a one month journey during the month of December and we are invited to set aside time to make this season a journey of faith. Like Zechariah, it would be good to spend some time in silence, not talking but listening.

Take a break from the hustle and bustle for some quiet reflection. Be alone with the miracle of the Christmas season. Go solo with God. Take some time to listen for the voice of God and listen to yourself. Pay attention to those grumpy, negative, skeptical, sad, doubtful, disbelieving places within yourself and allow God to shine the light of possibility and hope into you. Advent is a time for transformation. A time for faith. God is up to something and it is good.

**Ask:** How can I find time today to enjoy some silence and be alone with God? Where do I see myself lacking hope or losing faith? How can I invite God's Holy Spirit into those places?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Blessed and Holy Lord, thank you for the many miracles we celebrate during the Christmas season. As I reflect on the miraculous births of both babies in the Gospel of Luke, John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah, help me see how You can make the impossible possible now as You did then. Transform my heart and mind as You did Zechariah's, speak to me in my silence and fill me with the joy and hope that is the spirit of the season, the spirit of Christmas, and the spirit of Jesus Christ Your Son. Amen.*