

THE FIRST 15

Thursday, December 12, 2024

By: Jan Davis

Today is Thursday, December 12 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

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days." Luke 1:67-75

REFLECTION

After his son John is born, Zechariah is changed. His voice returns. He utters his first words. He agrees with his wife Elizabeth that the baby's name is to be John. That is what the angel Gabriel told him nine months earlier. Then Zechariah breaks out in song. He praises God. Just as Mary's song is called the Magnificat, Zechariah's song is called the Benedictus because the first words in Latin are *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*, which translates to "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel".

Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and he prophesies. He predicts what is to come. He talks tenderly to his baby son. He prophesies the good things that his son John the Baptist will do and even more so he prophesies what Jesus will do. John the Baptist will prepare the way for the Messiah of God. Zechariah expresses awe that he gets to be a part of God's amazing plan and participate in God's work. He has a little boy to raise.

The angel told Zechariah that his son will be great in the sight of God and that he will be filled with the Holy spirit even before he was born. The presence of the Holy Spirit enables John to recognize the Messiah in the womb and leap inside of Elizabeth when her cousin Mary greeted her.

The Messiah will bring redemption for the people. He is the one from the house of David who will bring salvation. The prophets of the Old Testament promised this to be true. God will bring

freedom, rescue His people and show mercy and compassion. As a priest, Zechariah knew the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and the one who would precede Him and prepare the way. This is what the people had been hoping and longing for for generations. Now, Zechariah could clearly see how God was moving in these present miracles to fulfill the promises of the past.

This tiny, miraculous, baby son had a role to play in the salvation of the world. He is to be the one who will prepare the way for the Messiah of God. As Zechariah's song comes to a climax, its message of salvation moves beyond earthly liberation to the forgiveness of sins, rescue from death and the promise of eternal life. God's great rescue plan for humanity from the beginning of time had just made a huge leap forward - the time of salvation had arrived. God's one and only Son, Jesus the Messiah, was soon to be born.

Ask: How might God be presently moving in my life and I have been unaware? What would it take for me to see how God's good plan is actively at work in me, in our world and those around me?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy God, as Zechariah raised his voice to praise You, I do so as well. Blessed be Your name. Thank You for looking favorably on Your people, having a heart of mercy and compassion and providing a path for redemption and salvation. Thank You for the promises of the Old Testament prophets fulfilled in the birth of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. Help me find true joy this Advent season. I praise you from a heart overflowing with gratitude and love. Amen.