

Wednesday, December 1, 2004

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:13-14

Text for Today: *Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.*

On the Way to Christmas

In our rush to get to Christmas and the miracle in the manger, we may dash past the figures of Zechariah and Elizabeth with whom Luke begins his Gospel. Righteous, faithful, and elderly, they remind us of Father Abraham and Mother Sarah two thousand years earlier who waited year after year for the son God had promised them to be born. Sarah's reaction to the news that she would become a mother at her advanced age was to laugh, and her son Isaac's name means laughter.

When Gabriel the angel of the Lord approached old Zechariah in the temple as he was going about his priestly business with the incense offering, Zechariah's reaction was so like Sarah's: "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." Because Zechariah could not believe the miracle that Gabriel announced to him, Gabriel declared that the old man would be mute until his child was born.

It was another six months before Gabriel would announce the good news of a son to be born to Mary. And as soon as Mary learned what would happen, she left home to go visit Zechariah and Elizabeth. The joy of these three along with their amazement at what was happening is the same joy that is ours whenever we fully realize what this good news means for us.

God has visited God's people. Coming to us in the divine humanity of Jesus, God has declared that our lives matter, that God wants us to live abundantly, and that God wants to be our companion and friend as we walk this earth. Yes, we rush toward the miracle of that birth, but like Mary, let us tarry along the way to share the joy of Zechariah and Elizabeth who discovered for themselves that with God nothing is impossible.

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