

UNSETTLED ADVENT - SESSION I

READING

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense-offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, '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. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'

Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.’ The angel replied, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.’

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, ‘This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.’

Luke 1:5-25, NRSVA

CLOSING WORSHIP

A: Lord, it is night.

B: What has been done has been done – let it be.

C: What has not been done has not been done – let it be.

A candle is lit

A: This is our first advent candle

B: I hope it doesn't feel isolated, all alone

C: In Christ, there is no 'all alone'; in Spirit we are interconnected households, encouraging one another and making sure that when the flame flickers it is kept alight, or relit in hope.

A: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit

B: For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

C: Keep me as the apple of your eye

ALL: Hide me under the shadow of your wings.

A: My heart praises the Lord;

my soul is glad because of God my Saviour,

for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!

**ALL: From now on all people will call me happy,
because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.**

B: His name is holy; from one generation to another

he shows mercy to those who honour him.

**ALL: He has stretched out his mighty arm
and scattered the proud with all their plans.**

C: He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly.

**ALL: He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away with empty hands.**

**He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors,
and has come to the help of his servant Israel.**

**He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham
and to all his descendants forever.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.**

**Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**And forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen**

**Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

A: Keep watch, dear Lord,
with those who wake, or watch, or weep.

B: Tend the sick, give rest to the weary,

C: sustain the dying and calm the suffering;

ALL: all for your love's sake, O Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

A: Lord, it is night.

B: We rest in you. We pray for deep sleep, and joy in the morning.

C: And may Christ, and him crucified, remain our confession of faith.

Amen

WEEKLY CHALLENGES

Thank everyone for their participation, and challenge them by the next meeting to do one of the following things (share them by copying and pasting into the “chat”):

1. To think of a time when your life was unsettled and prepare to share it with fellow-participants next time, or
2. To think of an area where you wish some unsettling would take place and prepare to share it at the start of our next session, or
3. To learn the British Sign Language for “unsettled” or create your own sign, ready to perform at the beginning of the next session, or
4. To make a picture called “unsettled Christmas” to share at the next session