

December 3, 2023
First Sunday in Advent
What Child is This?

Asking the Six Questions of Christmas

Today's Message: "How will I know that this is so?"

Scripture: St. Luke 1:5-20 (New Revised Standard Version)

⁵ 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. ⁶ Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

⁸ Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. ¹⁰ Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. ¹¹ Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ 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." ¹⁸ 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." ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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."

~ SERMON NOTES ~

Following Gabriel's announcement, Zechariah asked the angel, "How will I know that this is so?" In response to his questioning, he becomes mysteriously mute and remains so until Elizabeth gives birth to the promised child.

Let's imagine what it would have been like for Zechariah to be dumb-struck while he waited for God's promise to be fulfilled. What might this say to us?

1. SILENCE. At first, it seemed like a _____.
Sometimes things are so unexpected, so out of this world, or so good that we are left **speechless**.

2. SILENCE. It can be a _____ from God.
When Zechariah could not speak, they realized he had seen a vision in the temple. There is a difference between having to say something and having something to say.

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