

The Rev. Dr. Robert Kelley Jr. '51  
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Thursday, December 23, 2010

Morning Psalms 18:1-20; 147:12-20

First Reading Isaiah 33:17-22

Second Reading Revelation 22:6-11, 18-20

**Gospel Luke 1:57-66**

Evening Psalms 126; 62

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. 60 But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' 61 They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' 62 Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. 63 He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. 66 All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

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The Gospel text presents a three-fold outline: parentage, birth, destiny. Zechariah and Elizabeth (an aged, childless, priestly couple) are the devout parents. The angel Gabriel, God's sentinel, suddenly appears to announce the forthcoming birth of John. His destiny? That's something the hill country neighbors ponder as they ask, "What will this child become?"

We who live, worship, and serve as faithful Christians centuries later know full well what this child became and what he did as the Forerunner of the Messiah, the Advance Man, THE Herald of Advent. To John's everlasting credit he never sought to steal the spotlight that rightfully belonged to Jesus. Rather his motto was unwaveringly "He must increase, but I must decrease." May it be so with us as well.

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*Prayer: Oh Lord, many are the persons who played a part in the original Advent and Christmas story. The roles indeed were both large, like John's, and small. As the premier birth once more is celebrated, help us to rediscover our own assigned place in the unfolding drama and fulfill that role faithfully. Amen.*