

Thursday, December 20th, 2012

The Rev. Dr. Jean Henderson '68, Retired Pastor

Distinguished Alum '04

Scripture:

Luke 1: 5-25

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

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

21Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. 22When 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. 23When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

24After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, 25"This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

Devotional:

Advent - twenty-one centuries ago - a time of juxtapositions:

Gabriel talking to an old man about a baby;

 Gabriel talking to a young girl about a baby.

Gabriel punishing the old man for his unbelief;

 Gabriel praising the young girl for her belief.

A baby born to the old man and Elizabeth, named John;

 A baby born to the young girl and Joseph, named Jesus.

John, preparing the Way, and dying - his head on a platter;

 Jesus, the Way, dying - his body on a cross.

Advent – now – a time of juxtapositions:

Tears of sorrow for war-scarred earth and innocent dead;

 Tears of joy for reunions and signs of resurrection.

The garden of Creation where sin dimmed the flowers;

 The garden of Resurrection where death will be no more.

And all because God became one of us –

 The ultimate juxtaposition!

Prayer:

God, Alpha and Omega, make wide our minds, make deep our hearts, to absorb your love for us.

Amen.