

## **Advent Devotional December 23, 2020**

### **Scripture**

Luke 1:57-66

*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.*

### **Devotional**

#### **The Rev. Scott Dennis '13**

Do you like your name? Do you take pleasure in remembering why that name was chosen for you? Do you enjoy the sight of your signature? Do you see your name as a good reflection of who you are? Names are often expected either to carry a message or serve as a memorial beyond their primary task of identification. Whatever Shakespeare would have us believe, there's no denying that names are indeed significant things and that what we call a "rose" would, by no other name, smell quite as sweet.

Three names in our Gospel reading invite us to consider how the entire operation of God's plan of redemption unfolds. First, the name Zechariah is Hebrew for "God remembers His promise." Throughout the Old Testament, God made and reaffirmed the promise that the Messiah would someday come and make everything right. The second name, Elizabeth, is a Greek variation of the Hebrew name Elisheba, which means "God is the absolute faithful one." Time and again throughout Scripture, God is remembered as the absolutely faithful One who keeps his promises. The third name, John, means "God is gracious."

But there is a final, unwritten name that is necessary to give meaning to John's ministry and that guides the coming course of events after our Advent journey comes to completion: that name is Jesus, which means "God saves." Thus, in these four names, we behold anew and afresh unfolding before our very eyes the whole gracious purpose of our Lord Jesus' birth: God remembers his promises; God is absolutely faithful; God is gracious; and God saves.

As we finish this year's Advent journey, therefore, let us do so not by drawing attention to ourselves and to *our* names. Rather, let us bear witness to the Holy, Triune One who grounds the meaning of these four names and thus of our own—the One who has brought us to where we are, who journeys with us, and who rejoices with us as we greet joyfully the Christ child on Christmas morning.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, O Name above all names, with only two more sleeps before Christmas we find ourselves nearing the end of this year's Advent journey. As we prepare to welcome you afresh, sustain us in the peace that is your never-ending love, so that we may share the great joy of your birth with all we meet. This we ask for your name's sake. Amen.