

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Dec 24th 2016

“Blessed be the Lord ... for he has come to his people.” Luke 1:68

Tomorrow we celebrate the fulfilment of the Christmas promise: Emmanuel, our God with us. In the first readings all through this Advent season, we have read of God’s promises to lift us from the darkness; to save us from our enemies and most importantly, to be a constant, caring presence in our lives: to be with us, always. Today’s first reading from 2 Samuel is a clear reminder of God’s continual faithfulness to us: “I have been with you wherever you went.”

In the gospel from Luke today, we see Zechariah’s patience and faith in God. Because he doubted the angel who brought news of Sarah’s pregnancy, Zechariah has been unable to speak. For nine long months, Zechariah has been a silent witness to Sarah’s joy and the new life that has become evident within her.

Today we see the end of that story as their son is born. When Zechariah affirms that the boy will be named John, his mouth is opened and he can speak. Isaiah’s first words after his very long silence, are joyfully praising God. We read yesterday that “his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God.” In his long days of silence, Zechariah opened his heart to God in a new and deeper way, and accepted an invitation to trust God more.

Tomorrow begins the first day of the Christmas season. While we may exchange gifts with family and friends, this season can really be about us listening to the God who loves us so deeply. What gift does the God of “tender compassion” wants to shower us with? As we take a few moments each day to listen in the weeks ahead, perhaps we will sense as the “dawn from on high breaks upon us ... to guide our feet on the way of peace.”

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