

Advent is God's OMW

Question for Today – How Can I Know?

First Sunday of Advent for 2023

Scripture: Luke 1:5 – 20

Let us start our Advent series by looking at acronyms. Acronyms are little two or three letter phrases that convey a larger message. I am terrible at what an acronym means, let us see if you know some acronyms. I am going to give you a three letter acronym and raise your hand if you know what it means but you can only answer one time!

Let's start - BRB – Be Right Back OMG – Oh My God!
BTW – By The Way IDK – I Don't Know LMK – Let Me Know
LOL – Laughing Out Loud SMH – Shaking My Head
TBD – To Be Determined IMO – In MY Opinion OMW – On My Way

Advent is the season during which we wait for the birth of Jesus. We wait for Jesus' arrival. Advent is God's OMW! Advent is God's message saying 'On My Way'!

The birth of Jesus story is found in both Matthew's Gospel and Luke's Gospel. In Matthew's Gospel, he mainly looks at the male approach to the story, but in Luke's Gospel we get the female version. Let us look at Luke's Gospel this Advent season.

Today let us look at Luke 1:5 – 20, the story of Zechariah and let us look at the question for today – How Can We Know?

If we look at Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth we will find that Elizabeth comes much holier stock. Zechariah belongs to the priestly order of Abijah but Elizabeth is a descendent of Abraham. Both of them were righteous before God, living blameless according to the commandments and regulations of the Lord.

Let us examine this question as we look at Zechariah. Zechariah was a priest who worked in the Temple. He entered the sanctuary and offered incense to God. One would think that Zechariah as he was working in the Temple would possibly expect God presence to appear, But Zechariah was not expecting God's presence on this day!

Zechariah is up in years and I am sure some time ago he prayed in the Temple for a son. But as time went by, Zechariah has stopped praying for a son and all he is doing is his work.

When the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the Alter of Incense, Zechariah was terrified and fear overwhelmed him.

The angel said to Zechariah – 'Do not be afraid, your prayers have been answered and your wife will have a son and you will name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.'

Zechariah did not know how to respond when God's presence appeared on this day. With his mouth he does not know what to say but all he can do is ask a question of the angel – 'How will I know that this is so?'

What a great question for us to think about and discuss – How will we know?

With everything going on in our world, how will we know?

With war in Israel and war in Ukraine, how will we know?

With another mass shooting recently, how we will know?

With so many illnesses and sickness around us, how will we know?

With COVID still out there, how will we know?

With our political situation within our nation, how will we know?

How will we know?

I have always imagined Zechariah asking this question with some sarcastic laughter in it. The Angel Gabriel replied – ‘I stand in the presence of God and I have been sent to speak this good news to you. 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.’

Zechariah is made mute because he did not believe! Zechariah is in the Temple where one would expect God’s presence, but he does not believe the good news!

Here you are in this Chapel, do you believe? Are you like Zechariah and are you going to be made mute about all that is happening in the world and our nation? Do you expect God's presence in our world? Are you like Zechariah?

May you not be like Zechariah! May you speak out to all the injustices in this world. May you speak out in love and compassion about our great nation. May you be the mouth piece to proclaim God's glory!

Here we are in this Chapel, do we believe? Are we like Zechariah and are we going to be made mute about all that is happening in the world and our nation? Do we expect God's presence in our world? Are we like Zechariah?

Let me end this message with a story – A man hit a deer on his way to the Christmas program at church on Sunday. Someone asked him "What were your first words out of your mouth when that happened?" The man was pleased to be able to say 'Thank you God!' He was grateful nothing more serious happened.

What are the first words out of your mouth when you face an unexpected challenge or difficulty? Is it 'Thank you God?'

Zechariah had his doubts and as a result God silenced him for the duration of Elizabeth's pregnancy. But when his son was born, Zechariah's tongue was loosened and he could speak again. The first words out of Zechariah's mouth were words of praise. He did not complain about how hard it had been to be silent, he did not make excuses for his previous lack of faith. What Zechariah did was begin to praise God!

May our first words out of our mouth each day during Advent be words of praise! May we not be like Zechariah! May we speak out to all the injustices in this world. May we speak out in love and compassion about our great nation. May we be the mouth pieces to proclaim God's glory!

Let us pray:

In this season of Advent, may our speaking and our living reflect the hope we have in you, O God. AMEN.