

## ZACHARIAS, cont.

Zacharias and Elizabeth had no children (a believed curse in ancient times) and Zacharias had probably prayed for a son, for so long that he couldn't remember not doing so. I suspect that after all these years Zacharias had no idea that God would answer his greatest wishes. A son, and not just a son, but one "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." But rather than praise God, Zacharias asks "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years".

Like so many of us, Zacharias was so overwhelmed in the presence of the holy he didn't know what to say. Or perhaps, he had hoped for a son for so long, that he just couldn't take another disappointment. I'm sure that Zacharias wanted to believe, like us he's just not sure anymore. God's message can seem just too good to be true. Like many, we mostly are frightened when our deepest desire comes true.

Perhaps, like Zacharias, we also forget that God is able, He can do anything! That when God makes a promise, that promise is kept, even if we don't believe. Because Zacharias didn't believe, the angel Gabriel made Zacharias mute.

Meanwhile outside in the Temple courtyards the people are still waiting for Zacharias to come out. At the time, it was the custom for the incense priest to come out of the temple as soon as he was finished praying, to assure the people that he had not been struck dead and to bless the people. After the blessing the hundreds of worshippers would shout, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting." Followed by blaring silver horns, cymbals, and songs.

But not this day, when Zacharias came out, he could not speak and give the priestly blessing. Poor Zacharias could only gesture through hand motions, to tell the story of what happened to him in the temple. It's hard to know if anyone believed him. We all know the rest of the story. That God's word is true. Zacharias and Elizabeth have a son who becomes a man; a man that Jesus will say "among those born of women there is no one greater than John". May we all be like John the Baptist "proclaiming the good news of the coming Kingdom of God". Rather than be left speechless like Zacharias by our doubt of the good news from God.

Oh, and that blessing that Zacharias was to give the people. It is one we hear often repeated by our Bishop the Rt. Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard.

The Lord bless you  
and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace. Numbers (6:24-27)

Praying that our Lord finds you and yours well,

Archdeacon, The Ven. Mark Richardson

