

Monday December 5 ~ Luke 1:5-13

This week's readings focus on John the Baptist who was an important person in the Gospel story. Each of the four Gospel writers tell us how John's ministry prepared the way for Jesus' ministry. Luke tells us about John's parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah. We are reminded of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17) and Elkanah and Hannah (1 Samuel 1) who unexpectedly receive the blessings of parenthood.

- Do you ever wonder how God wants to use you? Or when? The Bible is filled with stories of men and women who serve God at unexpected times and in unexpected ways. Have you ever experienced an unexpected blessing or an unexpected call?
- Prayer: *God of miracles, forgive me when I give up hope. Give me patience to wait and trust in your wisdom for my life. Amen.*

Tuesday December 6 ~ Luke 1:18-25

When Zechariah hears the good news that he and Elizabeth will have son, he can't believe it. Luke describes the contrast between Zechariah's question (Luke 1:18) and Elizabeth's celebration (Luke 1:25). Too often we are like Zechariah. Even when God hears and answers our prayers or calls and uses us—in unexpected ways—we can't (or won't) believe that it is happening to us.

- When in your life have you doubted like Zechariah? When have you had faith like Elizabeth? What was the difference? What can you do to nurture faith like Elizabeth?
- Prayer: *Powerful God, I sometimes struggle to believe in your love and power. Grant me grace to trust you fully. Amen.*

Wednesday December 7 ~ Luke 1:57-66

The events surrounding John's conception and birth led to the crowd's question in Luke 1:66. But most parents, at the birth of a child, ask the same question: "What then will this child become?" And most people, at some time in their lives, ask the question of themselves: "What will I become?" The point is that God can and will do miracles when lives are dedicated to His service.

- Do you live in expectation that God will use you for great things?
- Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help me become the person you created me to be. I want live the life I am meant to live. Amen.*

Thursday December 8 ~ Luke 1:67-79

The song of Zechariah—known as the *Benedictus*—is one of the four poetic celebrations of God's goodness found in the first two chapters of Luke. (See also Luke 1:46-55, Luke 2:14, and Luke 2:29-32.) The meaning of John's birth is announced in the stanzas of these verses; that John is the prophet who will prepare the way for the Messiah, promising God's salvation by the forgiveness of sins.

- Read Luke 1:67-79 again. Notice how many major Biblical themes are mentioned: covenant, grace (mercy), salvation, and peace. Which of these themes are most important to you today?
- Prayer: *Faithful God, thank you for preparing my heart to receive your salvation. Thank you for your saving grace. Amen.*

Friday December 9 ~ Luke 1:14-17, 80, Luke 3:1-6, 15-16

Luke emphasizes the prophetic nature of John's life and ministry. He was set-apart by God to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah and "prepare the way of the Lord." John is not the Messiah, he is the one who gets the people ready for the Messiah's advent (coming.)

- As you prepare your home and your family for Christmas, are you also preparing your heart? Advent is a season for spiritual preparation. Are you making time for prayer? For Bible reading? For quiet reflection and meditation?
- Prayer: *God of Advent, prepare the way for your Son to come into my heart. Let new life be born in me this Christmas. Amen.*

Saturday December 10 ~ Luke 3:7-18

John's message is clear: God forgives; people repent. He calls the people who flock to hear him to repentance, to turn from sin and serve and obey God. Their repentance will prepare the people to follow Jesus. John is also clear that repentance is more than thoughts and words. Repentance is supposed to bear fruit. That is, true repentance results in changed lives.

- Let John's words lead you into a time of reflection: What needs to change in your life? What do you think God wants you to do (or not do) differently?
- Prayer: *God of second-chances, thank you for the call to repent. Forgive my sin. Lead me into new life in you. Amen.*