

Dear Friends,

Luke 1: 5-10

In the eyes of the world Elizabeth and Zechariah were good people who deserved good things. Life however had not been kind to them. They lived with the disappointment of never having had children. Some people choose not to have children. They want to take their lives in other directions. But not Elizabeth and Zechariah. They yearned to have children. They were desperate to have children. It had just never happened and they were surely too old for it to happen now, that joy had passed them by and missed them out.

There are many who share their experience of finding life not so kind. There are those who reach out for something, but find the object of their desire beyond their grasp; those who feel that an important part of the puzzle was missing from the box when their lives were handed to them; those who made one mistake or took one wrong turn which somehow managed to upset everything; those who hoped for so much more, but put up with so much less.

These are the realities that life serves up. We just have to find our own ways of managing and overcoming them. And that's what Elizabeth and Zechariah did. They got on with their lives; they muddled through; they made the best of it; just like the rest of us. And life did have its gifts as well. They had some adventures. They found the things which gave them delight.

Through it all, Zechariah continued with the tasks that were placed in his hands. These included taking his turn working as a priest in the temple. On one of these occasions, he was given the important responsibility of making an offering of incense in the sanctuary. For Jewish people the sanctuary in the temple was the most special place. It was most likely a once in a lifetime experience for Zechariah, the high point of his work as a priest. In this holiest of places, he offered a prayer. "May the God of mercy come into the sanctuary and accept with pleasure the sacrifice of his people." In this prayer he reached out for God. He asked God to come.

In this time of Advent, we too ask God to come. Our Advent prayer is "Come Lord Jesus". It is our hope that God will come and encounter us in our lives. Maybe we are not hoping for a big experience. We don't expect a vision of angels. A glimpse however might be nice; just a taste; just a sense of God's touch upon us. We are not looking for a big sign, not a violent earthquake, a mighty wind or a blazing fire. The still, small voice would be fine. We sing "How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given." That would be enough. We don't need God to come noisily. It would be okay for God to come quietly, silently. We just want to know that God does come, that God does abide with us. That would give us the quiet confidence that we are loved by God, that God has made us with something good and meaningful that we may give to others.

Zechariah prays for God to come. Perhaps he didn't actually expect anything to happen, because you don't do you? He didn't expect God to actually come, he didn't expect God to actually make a difference to him or his life. That was a big mistake.

God bless you,

Tony