

Small Wonders - St. Luke 1:68-79

Do you have any enemies and do you know their names? Is it someone who is not a Seahawk fan? A neighbor who drives too slowly? A fellow worshiper who worships in a manner that irritates you and you find yourself getting angry?

When our Gospel lesson was written enemies were a reality and easily named. In Jesus' day the Hebrews lived in occupied territory, with a backlog of experience as captives living in exile. People, especially Zechariah, would know to be careful regarding the how and what to say, not wanting to do anything that might bring the attention of the Roman officials. And the last word to pass their lips would be "revolution."

When Zechariah finally speaks again, after long weeks of silence caused by the angelic announcement that his wife Elizabeth would bare a son, his emotions must have topped the scales. As in the movie "Roots," Zech lifts his son to God in the Temple, and proclaims that his son will be a prophet setting the stage for God's human entrance into the world. This will be the fulfillment of the promise God made thousands of years ago. The Messiah will save us from our real enemies.

In the culture of the day, the words of Zechariah were a profound symbol to faithful Jews attending the rite of naming and circumcision of John. What a relief for Elizabeth and Zech to know that God had not forgotten them, and that their son would announce the beginning of a new age.

While it is true our enemies are not attempting to kill us or over run our communities, they are instead anxiety, anger, depression, and/or indifference. We don't worry about our homes being sieged but we do wrestle with despair, illness, death, and loneliness. Our need is for the grand peace that only comes from God that we might serve resting in him.

You and I have an advantage over Elizabeth and Zechariah: We know the end of the story. John the Baptizer is murdered for speaking the truth and introducing a new era of mercy and peace. We contemplate the beheading of John and ask, "*Where is this new kingdom?*" You would have to be a hermit not to see the wars, the murders

on our streets or in our schools, the homeless and hungry children, and the elderly and mentally challenged who are abused. Where is the peaceable kingdom? How can an infant prepare the way of the Lord today?

In the hustle and bustle of our lives, perhaps we need to cease asking questions and in the silence that ensues, learn to hear and trust God. It could be that we also need to remember the words of Psalm 46:10, "*Be still and know that I am God.*" In our society, hope is found not in God but in our finances and our technological gadgets, computers and phones. God seems unnecessary when we think we are in control of our lives.

The Season of Advent is a time to deck the halls and to clear the decks, to prepare for the greatest gift of all time, Jesus Christ. John is the child of hope. Born to poor peasants in a village in the sticks, who becomes a man of God who lives in the desert and challenged people to be honest with themselves and God, and to come back to God. It is a message needed today.

The act of forgiveness is an act of reconciliation. God asks us to forgive, not as our parents forced us to do as children, but after reflection and with gentle love, we forgive as we have been forgiven. A forgiving heart is an open heart. Open hearts, open minds, open doors. Into this heart God's pours the peace that Psalm 23 speak about. This peace allows us to trust in God even when our enemies smile at us and all around us appears to be dark. Trust means that God's light will come from God and often, as Zech discovered, it comes from the most unlikely places. Alleluia. Amen.