

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 24, 2016

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth J. Woo, Assistant Professor of Church History

SCRIPTURE

LUKE 1:67-80

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. 69 He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. 72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. 78 By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." 80 The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

DEVOTIONAL

We anticipate. We prepare. We dream. But what do we really expect? And when is the waiting worth it? Zechariah was accustomed to waiting. He waited for a son. Then he waited to get his voice back. And when he did, it was worth it. He who had expected so little of God now dares us to expect too much! God's promise spans generations, overcomes resistance, endures forgetfulness, and—in Zechariah's case and our experience—transforms doubts. This Christmas Eve, may Zechariah's song deepen our anticipation, guide our preparations, inspire our dreams: Dawn has broken from on high! By the light of Emmanuel those who sat in darkness and walk in death's shadow can serve God without fear in the way of peace. Whether in joy or in the sorrow of sin, injustice, and despair, let us hope in God's tender mercy in Christ and learn to expect nothing less.

PRAYER

Gracious and merciful God, fill our hearts with the hope of Zechariah as we celebrate this eve of Christ's arrival. Guide our feet into the way of peace, that we might walk without fear to reflect and extend the light of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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