

December 7, 2017 by Frank Pifer

Read: Luke 1:11-17

In reading this passage, you see what an incredible vision was given to Zechariah and what an amazing promise. In the passage, Zechariah needs some reassuring. Zechariah had been praying for a child for many years. When he finally gets the answer, he doesn't really believe it. Sometimes, we pray and pray, and because we don't get an answer, much like Zechariah, we think that God hasn't heard us. Place yourself in the shoes of Elizabeth and Zechariah for a moment. Childless for most of your life, past the childbearing age, and then you find out that you are expecting. Is it a time of rejoicing or unbelief? Not only are you expecting a child, but you are told the child's name and that he will do great things. That is the hope of all parents, that each child they raise will do all things. But their son John has a greater mission in life, to live under the constraints of being a Nazirite, being filled with the Holy Spirit. How can that be since this is a privilege of a few prophets and kings only. John was predestined to fulfill Malachi's prophecy and Isaiah's prophecy. What can we learn from these verses? What can we do to nurture an attitude of faith, of belief, of spiritual sensitivity and openness? I think it begins with humility, repentance, and prayer. When we see unbelief in ourselves, don't excuse it, but be ashamed and ask for God's forgiveness. We should ask God to create in us a pure heart, and renew our steadfast spirit within each of us. Ask for joy of salvation. Ask for a willing spirit. Ask for a broken and contrite heart. But we must also read and study the word of God, asking God to reveal his truth to our hearts. Fortunately, God did not leave Zechariah in disgrace forever-though I expect those nine months seemed like an eternity. When John was born, God released something new and wonderful in his spirit. Zechariah himself is filled with the Holy spirit and prophesies God's words.

We are disciples on a journey with Jesus. We have faith slumps and some pretty rough edges. But as we walk with Jesus, he is refining and honing us to be worthy disciples. God can make a wonderful disciple out of an old, set-in-his ways priest and an impulsive fisherman. What can He do for us?

Father forgive us for our incidents of unbelief. Sometimes I have mistaken my religious fervor for faith. Build faith in my heart and in my brothers' and sisters' hearts. Replace our unbelief and hesitancy to step out on your promises with a boldness and assurance in God. Change us, we ask you. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.