

Advent: 17th Dec - Fettered and free



Image: Free bubbles, D Sharon Pruitt

Opening Prayer

He speaks, and listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.
Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosened tongues employ;
ye blind, behold your saviour come,
and leap, ye lame, for joy.
Charles Wesley

May we too, open ourselves up to the healing, freeing, redeeming love
Of the Christ Child this Christmas.

The story continues...

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbours, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him. Luke 1: 57 -66

Reflection

The result of Zechariah's unbelief was a nine month imposed silence, prisoner in his thoughts. His sentence, self-imposed, in a sense, came to an end when he acknowledged the will of God and named his son John, which means "gift of God". How often do we imprison ourselves because we are afraid to trust God? In what ways have we forged fetters that prevent us from living the life God wants us to lead, that life abundant that was promised us. One of the interesting things about the characters in this story is how often they are fearful, doubtful, in spite of living righteous lives. They do not feel they have earned the right to God's favour. Yet God works with and through their fear to accomplish his purposes.

Exercise

Think of any negative emotions you carry that are binding you to a place where you do not want to be. Picture the baby Jesus in the manger. Make him a gift of the negativity you hold in your heart. Release it to him, consent to his will, and be free to live in his promise.

Jane Denniston