

Elizabeth and Zechariah

Z: What are you doing Liz?

E: As you can plainly see, Zech, I am working on your vestments. I am always so proud of you when you go to Jerusalem to take your turn with the priestly duties. I want you to look your very best.

Z: Hummm, nice. (Stares off into space, knee bouncing).

E: (reaches over and stops knee bouncing). Easy with the knee bouncing there, old man, you are shaking the whole bench. What's bothering you?

Z: Sorry, its nothing. (Keeps staring off into space).

E: Are you that anxious to get to Jerusalem? You know, I love you, old man. But you never were very good at the waiting part.

Z: What's that? I'll have you know the other priests have a nickname for me. They all call me patience.

E: (chuckling) yes, I know about the nickname. Could it be that they are just engaging in some good natured joking. They do like their jokes, don't they.

Z: (smiling) Okay, you got me. I never did like the waiting part. But that's not it today.

E: No?

Z: No, I was just thinking back to how it was before John was born. You remember how long we prayed for a baby? And every year we were getting older and still no baby. I was ready to give up. But somehow, you never did.

E: Well, you know women are just better at waiting.

Z: Really, I thought that was just an old wives tale.

E: Careful, there old man, you are talking to an old wife. And old wives are right more often than not. (Smiles) However, I am pulling your leg a bit here. It was really hard for me too.

Z: But still you never gave up. What kept you going?

E: It was the stories of faith that helped me keep going. God kept reminding me of how he gave Sarah and Abraham a child in their old age. Then there was Hannah and the way she prayed and prayed, and God gave her the boy Samuel who would grow up to be a great prophet. So I kept reminding myself that these things happen in God's timing, not ours.

Z: I guess I needed more. And God gave me more. God gave me a great vision.

E: I remember. (Smiling)

Z: We priests had drawn lots as we always did, and I was chosen to go into the temple to offer the sacrifice that year. While I was in there beside the altar, an angel of the Lord appeared to me. I was overwhelmed by a sense of sheer power and sheer pure holiness. It scared me half to death. And the angel said,

Both: *“Do not be afraid.”*

Z: Then he said, “Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you will name him,

Both: *“John.”*

**Z: And you will have joy and gladness and greatly rejoice at his birth.”
I have told this story too many times haven’t I?**

E: Nonsense, it is a story that needs to be told often. I just love the story. Please go on.

Z: Yes, well, the angel promised that our son John would turn the people of Israel to God and get them ready for the coming of the Messiah.

E: Yes, and that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth.

Z: Indeed! But then because I had such trouble believing, the angel, Gabriel said that I would be unable to speak until the baby was born.

E: That must have been really tough, you preachers do love your words.

Z: Yes, we do, that is true. And it was a bit embarrassing to come out of the temple that day and not be able to talk to the gathered people. Still they caught on fast that something special had occurred. And the angel had brought such good news, I could hardly contain my joy.

E: So when the baby was born, I had to tell them that his name was John. They didn’t believe me because no one else in the family was named John. So then you had to write it down for them.

Z: Yes, I wrote it down very clearly for them. His name is John the Presbyterian.

E: Now, you are just being silly. We won’t have denominations for another 1500 years. He was called John the Baptist because he baptized so many people.

Z: You are right, of course, dear. (Laughing) We priests do love our little jokes. But you had a special experience sent from God too. That too is a story that needs to be told again and again.

E: You are right, of course, dear. (Laughing). Yes, when I was about five months along with John, my young cousin Mary came to pay me a visit. She too was with child. But she was not formally married yet, and the circumstances were particular. No doubt she was scared of what might happen to her and what the neighbors would say.

Z: So she came to you for help and comfort.

E: She did. And when I saw her coming I felt my baby leap in my womb. I'm not talking about a normal baby kick, or a bit of twisting and turning. This was far more than that. And I knew, I just knew, somehow that Mary would give birth to the Messiah.

Z: God is good.

E: All of the time! Anyway, I ran forward and wrapped my arms around Mary and told her what God had revealed to me. She was much relieved and comforted.

Z: And as had been foretold, our son John was born. He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

E: Always so serious.

Z: Yet, always a rebel too.

E: Fulfilling his role to prepare the way for the Messiah to come.

Z: And Jesus was born as was foretold.

E: Come to save his people from their sins.

Z: All happens in God's good time and for God's good purposes.

E: Yes, still it was so very hard to lose John, so young, I still miss him. And Jesus died so young too.

Z: Yet, God did such powerful work through them. And God is not finished. God is still working.

E: And so we wait, and so we watch, and so we celebrate.

Z: Amen.