

## Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Dec 24th 2018

As the Advent season draws to a close, today's readings take us back to our forbearers in the faith who also struggled to see the promises of God take form. We continue to share much with these early followers of God, including their struggle to maintain faith and hope when God's promises yet seem far off, when their fulfillment depends on what is yet to come.

The readings from Samuel show us a king who became uncomfortable with his personal success. Most kings do not think it odd for them to live in luxurious accommodations – isn't that one of the perks of the job? But David's reflection on the comparison between his house and the house of the Lord disrupted his comfortable existence. He wanted to do something. Through Nathan the prophet, God brought David another message. David the king was not going to become the author of change that he preferred. Instead, he would have to wait and watch for God alone to bring about an even greater change, all in the manner that God desired, in His time, and His way.

God chose to fulfill his promises through David's offspring, after he had "rested with his fathers." Our children are gifts from God, and we cannot control either their existence or their destiny. We have a role to play, to be sure, but once they launch into the world, we must generally stand by and watch their lives unfold. Some of that watching apparently occurs after we are gone from this life! This truth likely seems as uncomfortable for us as it is for a successful king like David, who is used to getting things done his way. But God requires this kind of patience from all of us, from the greatest to the least.

Zechariah sees the time of fulfillment moving forward in history, but still not yet within his sight. Zechariah knew the scriptures and tried to live them. He also had the benefit of an encounter with the angel Gabriel when he was performing his priestly duties. His skeptical response to Gabriel earned him a time of silence, which was also a sign to those around him. Zechariah would wait for months for his wife, Elizabeth, to conceive and to bear a son, John, in their old age. And in the meantime, Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, would be experiencing a similar visitation from Gabriel and a miraculous conception, too, but of a different nature.

During his time of silent reflection, Zechariah was able to connect the dots in the stream of history that was moving his way. He knew that God was working in a big way, but he could not yet know how God's promises would be fulfilled. Still more years would pass before his son, John, started his ministry, preparing the way for the Messiah. Yet Zechariah trusted the God that he knew, finding faith and hope that God would bring to pass what he had promised.

There may be advantages to living downstream in history, as there are more data points to connect that can confirm progress as the promises of God are revealed. But the flow of history is still moving in our time, too. We know that God has fulfilled his promises through the revelation of his Son, Jesus. This was David's offspring. But the fullness of our Lord's reign, including rest and peace, require us to wait, to be patient, and to hope, trusting in the goodness and mercy of God to continue moving us along. Let us remind one another in this season to wait patiently as we look for his return. Thanks be to God.

