

# advent week one

day five, thursday, december 2nd

“On the right side of the altar of incense an angel of the Lord appeared. This terrified Zechariah and he fell before him out of fear. The angel said, “Zechariah, don’t be afraid because your prayers have been heard! Your wife Elizabeth will have a son and you will call his name John. There will be a lot of joy, celebration, and many will be glad. Many of the sons of Israel will return to the Lord, his God. He will go before God in the spirit and power of Elijah and turn the fathers’ hearts to their children and the disobedient to an attitude of righteousness. He will prepare people for the Lord.”

Luke 1:11-17

Seeing the angel at the altar must have terrified this priest—no one else was allowed into this special place. This was a divine act. Yet even more divine was the promise that God not only heard his and Elizabeth’s prayers, but that their son would one day lead people back to God. There was hope for the people of Israel!

In a time when people’s hearts were captivated by a mighty empire bent on power, false peace, and materialism; a faithful couple was told that their son would do God’s work. Lives would change!

Christmas has always been counter-cultural. Christmas boldly states that lives can change.

**REFLECT:** Today the empire of power, false peace, materialism, and consumerism tries to capture our hearts and distract us from the daily presence of God, especially during this season of Advent. How are you praying for God to appear in your life this Christmas? Where are you longing to see a message of hope?

**PRAY:** Lord, you appear where no one else is allowed, and sometimes that is at the altar of our hearts. You appear in our lives to offer us hope. You cut through time and space to remind us that today people can turn to you, even in darkness. May we fall before you in love and go before you in faithfulness. Amen.