

# 25 Days of Advent

## Seeing Jesus Through the Eyes of the Christmas Story Characters

### ADVENT DAY 3: Dec. 3 – Angel Gabriel Brings Joy to the Elderly

#### Devotional

The first time we hear about an angel called Gabriel is in the book of Daniel, an angel sent by God in answer to Daniel's prayer that was delayed for three weeks due to fighting with the devil. It took the Archangel Michael to break him free. Then we don't hear about him again until Luke Chapter 1 as he retells the original Christmas story.

Gabriel had a huge task that first Christmas, and it began six months before the birth of Christ when he was sent to visit a simple priest in Jerusalem. The task that day should have been simple – he was to tell Zechariah that his prayer for a child had been answered; he and his wife would have a son. That should have been great news, right? If you've been praying for something literally for decades, wouldn't you be happy when it finally happened?

But Zechariah is scared at first, then very skeptical of the angel's message. "How can that be?" he asks.

Gabriel is not too happy when Zechariah questions him. He gives Zechariah his credentials – "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news." I imagine Gabriel rolling his eyes and thinking, "Good grief ... Why isn't he at least a little grateful? Maybe this wasn't the best choice to father the one preparing Israel for her Messiah."

He lets Zechariah know he's going to have a consequence of his unbelief: "And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

Ouch, that's harsh. Or so it seems to human eyes.

In his book, *The Characters of Christmas*, Daniel Darling describes the scene this way:

*God loves to hear our doubts, to field our questions, and to hear our anguished cries. But it is disbelief that is a sin, our unwillingness to trust God can do the impossible. And so Zechariah's punishment was to be struck mute for the duration of Elizabeth's pregnancy.*

*And in a way, this affliction was less of a punishment and more of a gift from God. To not speak would be to sit in silence before God, to quiet the chattering of the soul and the noise of his circumstances. In a way, this is the work God seeks to do in the heart of all of us. Christmas is a good time to practice silence, to sit and listen to the voice of God to put away the devices that so often keep us from faith. A priest, who often spoke words of blessing on God's people would be silenced and would emerge with a renewed faith in the possibility of God's promise.*

Maybe that time spent in silence was just what Zechariah needed to prepare himself to raise John the Baptist. That's a tall order; one that requires concentration, dedication, and determination. All characteristics Zechariah

honed during his time of solitude. When John was born, he was ready for the task. He named him John, and “Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.”

## Look Up – Connect with God

**Read:** Luke 1:11-22; 1:57-66

**Key Verse:** “The angel said to him, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.’” (Luke 1:19-20)

**Pray:** Lord, I know it’s human nature to question the impossible, to be skeptical of things we do not know or cannot understand. Help us to learn to trust you, particularly in the unknown. Help us to embrace the callings you have on our lives and to joyfully obey even when it makes no sense. Help us to keep our eyes on you.

## Look In – Family Memories

**Discuss:** The main message today is that even when we’re skeptical, when we can’t see how God can do what He says He will do, we can and should trust in Him. Talk about a time in your walk when God seemed to be asking the impossible yet came through and did exactly what He said He would do. Sharing these stories will both strengthen your faith and give your children seeds that will help their own faith grow.

### **Activity:**

- Advent Tree: make or select an ornament of angel wings and put it on the tree. [Download Ornaments](#) or [Ornament Ideas](#)
- Advent Garland: put the key verse on a paper/card, assign #3, and attach it to the garland twine. [Key Verses](#)
- Advent Cards: select a card and see what the activity might be (i.e., make hot chocolate and listen to Christmas carols, sit in silence from the outside world and enjoy God). [Family Activities](#)

## Look Out – Connect with Others

Is there a church in your community that could use some help – either yours or another? Take a step forward to serve where there is a need. Doing this as a family will be both fun and rewarding.