DAY 4

LUKE 1:11–17

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.

Have you ever noticed that in the Bible, whenever the Angel of the Lord shows up, people are always afraid? Not just afraid but terrified! The Bible says Zechariah "fell before him out of fear." Zechariah, who had been crying out to God for answers. Zechariah, who prayed for years and years. Zechariah, who wanted a son. That Zechariah.

God sent an angel with a response for Zechariah and he was afraid! Afraid? Yes, yes, he was. Think about that for a minute. How many times have we been surprised or even frightened when we see God working and answering our prayers? Why are we afraid or surprised? Maybe we were not prepared for the answer that was given? Maybe we were expecting a different answer? Maybe God's timing didn't line up with our own?

Zechariah was told that his son, John (who we would come to know as John the Baptist), would help prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of Jesus. What a strong reminder for us: Be prepared, and live with expectation that God will answer our prayers. When we pray, we should prepare for whatever the answer is going to be. This Advent season as we get ready for Christmas, may we continue to be people who are preparing our hearts and the hearts of others to hear from God.

REFLECT

Think back on a time when you were surprised by God. Why do you think you were surprised? Where are you longing to see God show up in your life these days?

PRAY

God, I know you have all the answers and your timing is perfect. Please grant me strength and courage to prepare my heart to hear a message from you. I thank you for all the work you have done in my life and all that you will continue to do. Bless me and those around me this Advent season. Amen.