



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast *December 3, 2023: The First Sunday in Advent*

The Birth of John the Baptist is Announced to Zechariah

Then there appeared to him [Zechariah] an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:11-17, NRSV)



What does the 1st Advent candle stand for?

The first candle in Advent symbolizes hope and is sometimes called the "Prophets' Candle." The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah's arrival. The "Prophets' Candle" is especially meaningful for our Chapel's journey through Advent, as we will be reading the prophetic voices in chapters 1 and 2 of Luke's gospel.

Hope for Elizabeth and Zechariah

During the first week of the season of Advent, we are reminded of the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah, a couple who had been childless for many years and had lost hope of ever having a child. But then, something miraculous happened. The angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and told him that he and Elizabeth would have a son. Not just any son, but a special prophet – John the Baptist – who declare the coming of the Lord.

This news must have been overwhelming for Zechariah. After all, he and Elizabeth were in their "mature" stage of life and had long given up having a child. But the angel's visitation shattered Zechariah's notion of the future and filled him with hope. The birth of John the Baptist was indeed a miracle that brought great joy to Elizabeth and Zechariah. But it was also a sign of the coming of the Lord, through John's teaching.

As we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord this Advent season, let us remember the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah and their hope and faith. Let us be filled with hope, knowing that God is always faithful to His promises. And let us be inspired by the message of John the Baptist, who reminds us to turn away from our sins and turn towards God, who offers us forgiveness and eternal life. - Vance

Prayer box: Lord, as we light the first candle of Advent, we are reminded of the hope that Christ brings to our broken world. Fill our hearts with hope and help us to share that hope with others. We pray for those who are struggling this season, for those who are feeling lost or alone, and for those who need your love and grace. As we reflect on the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah, we are reminded that you are a God of miracles and that you are always faithful to your promises. And Lord, bring healing for Liz and Maggie and bless their doctors, nurses, and caregivers; bring peace in the Middle East and Ukraine; comfort those suffering from natural disasters; bless all those who work for peace. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus, the source of our hope and the light of the world. Lord, hear our prayer! **Amen**