



Home

Thursday 19th December



House Model, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Tea Caddy (England, various woods).

Scripture: Luke 1.5-25

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense-offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him 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.'

Zechariah said to the angel, 'How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.' The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.'

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, 'This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.'

To reflect

The film *Home Alone* (1990, dir. Chris Columbus) is often shown around Christmastime. The plot focusses on the experiences of a young boy accidentally left behind when his family go to Paris for Christmas. The boy encounters people who are friendly and not and is assisted by people unexpected. The boy goes from enjoying being 'Home Alone' to wishing his family would return and reconsidering what home means to him.

Home, relationships to it, returning back or not, happy and sad memories associated with home, reflecting on homes previous festive seasons have been spent in. These are some of the themes you might ponder as you reflect on the word today. God promises in Zephaniah a homecoming when God's presence among the people will make all the difference at every level. A promise of home, different to that the movie *Home Alone*, D.H. Lawrence's *Pax* or models, but a promise of home with hope, love, joy and peace.

Advent Antiphon: O Radix Jesse

O Root of Jesse* **standing like a banner before the nations, in whose presence kings fall silent, whose praise all peoples shall sing: Come, set us free, do not delay.**

Pax by D.H. Lawrence

All that matters is to be at one with the living God
to be a creature in the house of the God of Life.

Like a cat asleep on a chair
at peace, in peace
and at one with the master of the house, with the mistress,
at home, at home in the house of the living,
sleeping on the hearth, and yawning before the fire.

Sleeping on the hearth of the living world
yawning at home before the fire of life
feeling the presence of the living God
like a great reassurance
a deep calm in the heart
a presence
as of the master sitting at the board
in his own and greater being,
in the house of life.

From The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence, by D. H. Lawrence

To Listen (these and other suggestions can be found on a Spotify playlist at

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0F5bU2sf4OiOtQY3q78Rj2?si=a99cbbf61e7d4587>)

- 'O Root of Jesse' by Samuel Rathbone, one version is performed by Siglo de Oro and Sam Corkin. A setting of the Advent Antiphon for saxophone and chorus.
- Another setting is 'Greater Antiphons: III. O Root of Jesse' by Arvo Pärt, one performance is by the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra. An instrumental setting of the Antiphon for today.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.