



Worship Illustration: Storybook
High Seas Adventures
God of Wonders Part 2: Genesis - Joshua
Unit 10, Lesson 48

Advent 1: Gabriel Visits Zechariah

Luke 1:18-20, 62-64, 68

The Captain smiled as he knelt and opened a box full of shiny ornaments. "Aye, I love traditions. They remind us of what is truly important to us. Christmas is my favorite time of the year. It takes me back to every wonderful Christmas when I was a boy."

Cody reached inside and grabbed gigantic evergreen circle. "Uncle Captain Billy, I found this giant hoop thing. You could lasso a whale with this thing!"

"Whoa! Be careful with that!" Captain Billy yelled as he snatched the green circle from Cody's hands and then carefully laid it on the deck. "That be very important. It's our old family Advent wreath!"

"Our whosie-whatsie?" Cody asked.

"Not a whosie-whatsie! An Advent wreath! This is the first week of Advent."

"What's an Advent?" Cody wondered.

"The word Advent means 'coming,' because Advent is the season when we look forward to the coming of Jesus. Just like we have traditions in our families, Advent is a tradition that is special to our church family. It's a special time when we get our hearts ready for Christmas," Captain Billy explained.

Cody pointed at the green circle. "What about this round thing?"

"That's the Advent wreath. It's round and has no end just like God's love for us has no end," The Captain noted as he traced the wreath with his finger.

Cody lifted a large white candle from the box. "Check this out, Uncle Captain Billy. I found this fat candle."

Captain Billy smiled as he placed four purple candles at different spots on the wreath. "We light a candle for each of the four Sundays before Christmas," he explained. Then he took the white candle from Cody and set it in the middle of the wreath. "The center, white candle is called the Christ Candle. We light that one on Christmas Eve to remind us that Jesus is the Light of the world."

"Cool, so can I spark this one up now?" Cody asked as he searched for a match.

"Patience, my boy. First we have to read our Bible Story so we can know what we're celebrating. Let me get the treasure map out right now!"

"So, what's today's story about: The shepherds? The innkeeper? The donkey in the manger?" Cody asked as the captain returned.

"Nope, today's story is about Zechariah." He answered as he turned to Luke 1.

Cody looked puzzled. "Zechariah? There was no Zechariah in the manger!"

"No! This part of the story comes before the manger," Captain replied. "In fact this was about a year before Jesus was even born."

"I didn't know the Christmas story went back that far."

Captain Billy nodded and sat down on a nearby crate. "Oh, yes! God had been planning for a long time to send a Savior. But, it was on this day that the angel Gabriel first appeared to announce it to Zechariah."

"So, who was this Zechariah dude?" Cody asked as he sat down on the deck.

"Zechariah was one of the high priests who worked in the temple. He and his wife Elizabeth were very old and they had always wanted to have a baby."

"Ha-ha," Cody laughed. "Old people can't have babies."

"Have you forgotten about Abram and Sarah?" Captain asked.

"Oh yeah." Cody remembered. "Nothing is impossible with God."

Captain Billy continued. "Well, it was Zechariah's turn to burn the incense when all of a sudden an angel appeared right next to the altar of incense... It made sense that the angel Gabriel would show up in such a holy place."

"Did Zechariah freak out?" Cody asked.

The Captain nodded. "Aye, he was scared but Gabriel said: Don't be afraid, Zechariah. God heard your prayer and He's going to give you a son named John. John will share the Gospel with everyone. The word gospel means 'Good News.'"

"You mean that little baby was going to tell the whole world about Jesus?"

"Aye, he was Jesus' cousin and his name was John the Baptist," Captain Billy replied.

Cody jumped up, gesturing with excitement. "Hey! I've heard of that guy! He's the one who told everyone to prepare the way for the Lord! So what did Zechariah say when the angel told him all that?"

The Captain answered very seriously, "He didn't say a word."

Cody sat back down, surprised. "Why not? I'd tell everyone."

"Zechariah didn't say a word for nine months because the angel made him be silent until John was born," Captain Billy explained. "You see, at first, Zechariah did not believe Gabriel's words. So, God gave Zechariah a type of quiet time to think about all that Gabriel had told him. And when his son was born these were the first words he spoke: 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.'"

Cody thought for a minute and said, "So, it was kind of like an Advent for Zechariah. God gave him some time to get his heart ready for the coming of the Lord."

Captain looked proudly at Cody. "Sometimes you surprise me, Cody."

"Thanks." Cody grinned. "So can we spark up that candle now?"

"First we must gather every one on the ship to light the candle as a family," the captain said.

Cody jumped up and ran up and down the length of the ship calling everyone over to the wreath. Soon, everyone on the boat had gathered to light the first candle of Advent.

"Next we must read the Bible verse that goes with this candle," Captain Billy said. Then he read Luke 1:13 and 17 out loud for everyone to hear, "The angel said to him: 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John... And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'"

Captain Billy laid down the Bible and handed a match to Cody. "Just like quiet time helped Zechariah, a little quiet time can help all of us get our hearts ready for Christmas. As you sailors watch the lighting of the Advent candle, why don't you take a few quiet moments and prepare your hearts for His coming?"

The entire crew was silent as Cody struck the match and lit the first candle. As the light from the little purple candle flickered in their eyes, each person on board the Caribbean Queen thought about Jesus coming to earth as a baby.