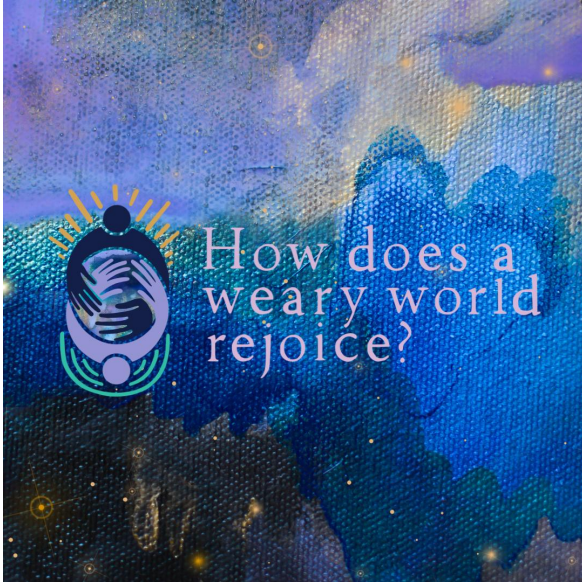


HOW DOES A WEARY WORLD REJOICE?

We allow ourselves to be amazed

December 17, 2023

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Luke 1:57-66

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.⁵⁸ Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father.⁶⁰ But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.'⁶¹ They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.'⁶² Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him.⁶³ He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed.⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God.⁶⁵ Fear came over all their neighbours, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea.⁶⁶ All who heard

them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. When was the last time you were truly amazed? Have you ever experienced the feeling of amazement turning into unexpected joy?
3. In what ways do you practice awe? What habits, rituals, or exercises can allow you to practice all more frequently?
4. Sharon Salzberg, an author and mindfulness teacher, describes awe as "the absence of self-preoccupation," and argues it can help silence one's inner critic. Recall Zechariah's initial response to the angel's news. He is critical and wants certainty. However, in this part of the story, perhaps the miracle of finding his voice silences his criticism, allowing him to be swept up into awe, giving thanks for his place in the larger community of faith. What do you learn from Zechariah's transformation?

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5. In Luke 1:58, Elizabeth's relatives and neighbors rejoice with her after John is born. The Greek word for rejoice is *sugchairó*, which means to celebrate God's grace together, to share in someone else's joy.¹⁵ Then, when Zechariah's voice returns, he rejoices by praising God through singing. In this story, we see the ripple effect of contagious joy, of joy that grows when it is shared. have you had an experience like this, where joy continued to ripple out from others to you or from you to others? What happened?
6. Have you been practicing joy this Advent season through a devotional, following a daily prompt on the South Elkhorn Facebook or Instagram Page, or with an Advent Calendar? If so, reflect on what that's been like, or what you've discovered.

Find resources for practicing Advent:

[***southelkhorncc.org/advent***](https://southelkhorncc.org/advent)

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