

## The Birth of John the Baptist

*'Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God.'* (Luke 1:57-64)



### A Reflection

Imagine being around on the day Elizabeth gave birth. The whole village must have been alive with wonder — not only because she and Zechariah had been blessed in their old age, but because everyone sensed that this child was different. His name, John, was a surprise, breaking with tradition. It was as if God Himself was declaring: “I am doing something new.”

Imagine how it must have felt when Zechariah could suddenly speak again, after months of strange silence. He declared his son's name was John and then began to speak of mercy, of light breaking into darkness, of a child who would prepare the way for the Lord. What did it all mean? How was his son involved in all this?

Imagine being around John as he grew up. Did he seem strange to the rest of the village, seeking the wilderness, and calling people back to God? As he grew older was he taken more seriously, did his words find a home in many a heart?

John seemed to point to someone else, to a God whose promises were not distant stories but living truth. John was awakening people to expect the Messiah, preparing hearts for Jesus. In his voice people heard new thinking — that God's kingdom was near, and it wouldn't look like the kingdoms of men. John taught those who listened



to look beyond themselves, beyond tradition, beyond fear and toward Jesus, who brings life in abundance.

What 'new life' is God bringing, or trying to bring, forth in me, or my church, or community?

How can I prepare the way for Jesus by embracing new ways of thinking or living faithfully?

### **A Prayer**

God of promise and joy,

You gave John to Elizabeth and Zechariah

as a sign of your faithfulness.

Give us courage to prepare the way,

and voices to proclaim your goodness, your newness, and your life.

Amen.