

**Advent Reflection 4  
Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> Dec  
St David's**

**Judges 13 v 2-7 and 24 to the end  
Luke 1 v 5-15**

**May the Words of my Mouth and the  
Meditations of our Hearts be  
acceptable to you our God and our  
Redeemer - Amen**

**How did he get it wrong? That is to  
say why did he get it wrong. I'm  
talking of Zechariah the upright  
man of God. He missed the Angel  
Gabriel - or if he didn't recognise  
him - he didn't believe him. I mean  
how do you do that?**

**He was scared of course - he shared  
that reaction with the mother of  
Samson and the Virgin Mary - but  
interestingly they seemed not to be  
so put out by an angels appearance,  
whilst they were going about their  
legitimate business. Mary famously  
said - and she had her query - a  
pretty obvious one concerning her  
virginity - May it be to me as you  
have said.**

**Zechariah in contrast gets a  
reprimand for his question and  
disbelief and 9 months of speech  
loss.**

**When I was reading the passage in  
preparation for his reflection - I had  
one of those mischievous moments  
- if I might call it that, that I get  
when reading scripture. Born I think**

**out of my strict Christian upbringing and a natural rebellious spirit. I misread vs 5 of Luke 1. Instead of reading Zechariah and Elizabeth were both of them upright in the sight of God - observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. I read or rather I misread - Zechariah and Elizabeth were both uptight in the sight of God.**

**When I had finished laughing to myself - I looked more seriously at that thought. You may - probably do - think this is a frivolous idea - but hear me out for a moment - and you can give as good as you get over coffee.**

**Sometimes those of us like Zechariah who have positions of**

**responsibility for leading worship can take ourselves rather too seriously - to be so fixed on the form of liturgy or form of worship and not be prepared to allow God to intrude in unexpected ways. That can also be true of the all of us - dare I suggest. We - who consider ourselves - upright in the sight of God - can - dare I say it - be uptight in the sight of God and be blindsided by the very God we seek to serve.**

**Zechariah was a good man. It can't have been easy for him - an establishment figure - to have a rather strange son like John a Nazirite like Samson. It would have been devastating for him later to loose his son. And yet- and yet - have you read Zechariah's song -**

**it's not a lot different from the Magnificat - Mary's song. It's a song of a man of great faith. In that song are these words 'Thanks be to God who enables us to serve him - without fear - in holiness and righteousness before him all of our days.'**

**So I am not going to be too hard on Zechariah - any harder than I am on myself. To serve him without fear - might just mean here that we should not be too uptight in our orthodoxy - and forget that God can work in unexpected and wonderful ways.**

**Are you ready - am I ready - for the Angel Gabriel this Christmas**