

Peace slide comes up on screen. Silence.

**Reading: Luke 1:5-25**

Peace slide back on screen. Zechariah enters, slowly, head down. He goes on to the stage, and then assumes a posture of prayer. Lights are dimmed, except those on stage. The recorded prayer of Zechariah is played. Zechariah stays still on the stage throughout the reading.

**Zechariah's Prayer**

*Father of us all,*

*I confess that I came here burdened with unanswered prayers. The weight of disappointment was heavy upon me, and always has been. It comes and goes, but as I witness others who are blessed with answered prayers, there is a pang.*

*A stab.*

*A longing.*

*I wonder sometimes what we – what I – have done wrong.*

*I came here because it was my duty. It was my turn. This is what I do. I come into this holy place with my own sense of inadequacy, and I light the incense. It fills this space with a fragrance, a sense of a new beginning.*

*But I am an old man, and I thought that new beginnings were beyond me.*

*Until you spoke through your angel, Gabriel.*

*I could not believe it.*

*In the midst of routine, service and habit, you spoke – and you surprised me. My wife, Elizabeth, is well beyond childbearing years. And yet, out of nothing, you have created something. A son, a son who brings hope and promise and proclamation. Out of disappointment, you have brought fulfillment. Out of tired resignation, you have brought a surprising peace.*

*There will come a time, I hope, when I can speak of this. But for now, I revel in this silence.*

*This quiet.*

*This promise.*

*This surprising peace.*

*There will be noise, questions, excitement and speculation, but I will stay in this moment and carry it with me.*

*Thank you, Father, for the way you move – in the mystery, I have peace.*

*Amen.*

Zechariah moves off stage, and the lights come back on.