

Our Sabbath Scripture Stories



FAMILIES RECLAIMING SUNDAY

Read aloud: Isaiah 49:1-6

Acts 13:22-26

Gospel: Luke 1:57-66, 80

"Br-r-r-ing! Br-r-r-ing!" The new school bell Mom got at an antique shop sounded through the house and through the yard.

"Br-r-r-ing! Br-r-r-ing!" it gonged again.

"Hey Mom!" Vincent sputtered. "School was out two weeks ago! Do you have to remind us of school every time you ring your new bell?"

"Well," Mom answered, "I have to have a way to get everyone's attention when I need you, even if you're on the swingset. I think this bell will be mighty handy this summer!"

"I sure came running!" Vincent agreed.

"Yes, you did!" Mom nodded. "I needed to gather you all right away because it's time for our Sunday Scripture readings before we go to Mass this morning."

In no time at all, the entire family was gathered, that is, everyone except Mary Clare and Hillary.

"Now, where can they be?" Dad wondered.

Soon Mary Clare strolled past the living room.

"Didn't you hear the attention bell, Mary Clare?" Dad asked. "We expect you to come promptly when you hear it."

"I didn't think you were serious, Dad," Mary Clare replied. "I knew I was supposed to come, but I didn't think it was anything important."

"Well, Mary Clare," Dad justified, "you know the rule, and because you doubted my authority, I will have to suspend your phone privileges for one week. No talking."

Mary Clare stood there speechless.

Just then, little 4-year-old Hillary came toddling in.

"Hillary, didn't you hear the bell?" Dad asked his youngest daughter.

"I did, Daddy, but I didn't know what to do," Hillary sighed. "Should I come running downstairs like you want, or finish making my bed like you want me to?"

Dad could see how his daughter was questioning what to do. "Okay, Hillary," Dad said to her. "I understand."

"Hey, why isn't she going to get punished like Mary Clare?" Vincent, always the testing one, asked his dad. "Technically, she was late too!"

"Good question, Vincent," Dad smiled. "And maybe our Gospel reading will even help explain it!"

Dad opened his Bible to Luke, Chapter 1. It told the magnificent story of the naming of John the Baptist in the temple. When it came time to reveal the name of the new baby born of Elizabeth and Zechariah, a mute Zechariah spoke for the first time in months.

"His name shall be JOHN!" Zechariah proclaimed.

The Gospel reading ended with the passage: *"The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel."* (Luke 1:80)

Dad ended the reading, but kept his Bible open.

"I can see by the expressions on your faces that some of this story doesn't fit together," he said to his family.

"Yeah," Mary Clare said. "Why couldn't he talk? What happened that he was speechless, but then all of a sudden could speak?"

"Double yeah!" Vincent chimed in. "Why was it such a big deal that Zechariah call the baby *John*? Was that a weird name or something?"

Dad chuckled. "That is why we need to go back to Luke's Gospel and read the beginning sections of Chapter 1. You see, Zechariah was in the temple when the angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son. Gabriel also told him that he should name the baby *John*, not *Zechariah Junior*, so to speak; and that *John* would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. Gabriel also said that he would turn many people towards God. But Zechariah doubted Gabriel because he thought that he and his wife were too old to have children. Then Gabriel said to him here in Verses 19 and 20: ' *I am Gabriel, who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news. But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words.*' "

"So Zechariah was punished by the angel?" Lucy asked.



"Well, he certainly was strictly dealt with, wasn't he?" Dad replied. "You see, God in His mercy gives us the lessons we need to change our thinking."

"But, I remember that Mary also doubted Gabriel when he came to her at the Annunciation," Lucy added. "She said, *'How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?'* (Luke 1:34) I remember this because it was my line in the Christmas pageant!"

"She *did* say that, Lucy," Mom answered. "But with Mary, she didn't *doubt* the angel, but quietly pondered *the meaning* of the message. Gabriel then explained to her about the Holy Spirit coming upon her, and in a great act of faith and surrender, Mary agreed."

"So, she knew this was a real messenger from God Himself and, after reflecting on his message, Mary agreed," Dad said. "Zechariah doubted the angel's word and was chastised with being speechless until after John was born."

Lucy nodded. "Same angel ... both question the angel ... but different reasons, and different responses!"

"Just like Hillary and Mary Clare receiving different responses from you, Dad, when they didn't respond to the attention bell!" Vincent chuckled.

"You might say so, Vincent!" Dad agreed. "They both were late, but the reasons were different. So ... different outcomes!"

"I like Hillary's outcome better," Mary Clare begrudgingly said. "I'll just have to take a lesson from Zechariah and be more silent than usual next week."

"But, what a great lesson you will have learned, Mary Clare!" Dad said. "You'll never forget the call of the bell, *or* the story of Zechariah!"

"Amen, Dad ... I think." Mary Clare whispered.