



The Herald of Christmas Promised

Luke 1:5-25

Icebreaker

As you begin the discussion portion of your group, take a few minutes to break the ice and get everyone talking. Either use these questions or come up with your own.

1. Share a favorite Christmas memory with your group.
2. What are some of your favorite Christmas traditions?

Series Overview

Our Advent series this year will be focusing in on the life of John the Baptist. Over the next few weeks we will be seeing how he was the herald of Christmas. It is through the life of John the Baptist that the way to Jesus was prepared. Join us as we unlock important themes such as pointing to Jesus, waiting for the Lord, and how a great man and prophet pointed us to someone greater than himself. Ultimately we will learn that we too are to point others to Christ this season.

Context

This week we are mainly looking at Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. We see that Israel has been in a waiting period for 400 years and that through this waiting period they have resigned that God has stopped moving. It is through the story of Zechariah that the waiting has come to an end. Through this story we see that God will do what He said He was going to do. Here is some important back ground information:

- **A PRIEST OF ABIJAH'S DIVISION:** Jewish priests were separated into twenty-four divisions (1Ch 24:10), each of which served in the temple two weeks out of the year. Since by this time there were almost one thousand priests per division, one was chosen by lot to offer the morning and evening sacrifice. A priest could be chosen for such an honor only once, and it was possible that an individual might never be chosen.
- **ZECHARIAH:** His name means "God remembers."
- **FROM THE DAUGHTERS OF AARON:** Aaron, Moses's brother, was the ultimate ancestor of all Jewish priests. It was preferable that priests marry a daughter of a priest.
- **1:17 IN THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIJAH:** Elijah was one of the first great OT prophets. Malachi, the last prophet to speak to the Jews, foresaw a time when Elijah would come again to prepare people for the Lord (Mal 4:5). While Jewish tradition anticipated the literal return of Elijah, the angel's message is that John would be inspired by the same divine energy that led Elijah.

Passage

Out loud, read Luke 1:5-25

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. 11 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, 17 and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the

hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

18 And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

19 And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." 21 And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. 22 And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. 23 And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

24 After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, 25 "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

Discuss

1. Why do you think Luke saw that it was important to record this story?
2. (1:7) Work as a group to identify a list of women in the Scriptures who were barren, yet God used to achieve his special purposes. Once you have the list recorded, encourage group members to identify additional similarities between those women.
3. (1:12) The fear he experienced of the angel is similar to that experienced other places in Scripture when an angel comes to an individual (1:29-30; Exod. 3:2-6; Dan. 10:7). Is this kind of fear okay?
4. Why was Zechariah unable to speak?
5. Nazareth was an insignificant little village (John 1:46) in the province of Galilee. God often uses what others see as small or insignificant, as with the “little town of Bethlehem.” What are some “small or insignificant” areas of your life that you have seen God work in?
6. Do you find that you struggle with waiting? What are some things you can practically do to help you improve in how you wait?
7. In your waiting, have you tried to control God?
8. What can we do to prepare for the Lord spiritually?
9. How can you point others to the Lord this Advent season?

Next Steps

At the end of your time together, allow yourself five minutes of silent contemplation. Think of it as your permission to do nothing but sit at Jesus’s feet. Contemplate the following question:

- **What can you do to prepare the way for Christ to move into your life this season?**

As you close your group time, end with prayer for one another and for those around you.

Family Component:

Be sure to check out our website for activities to do this week with your family.

Reading Plan:

For further reading look for the reading plan at:

<https://cornerstonenj.org/2020/11/23/herald-of-christmas-reading-plan/>