

Luke 1:5-25

Sunday, November 29, 2015 9:52 PM

Luke 1:5-25 (NRSV)

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. **6** Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. **7** But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. **8** Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, **9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. **10** Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. **11** Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. **13** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. **14** You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. **16** He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. **17** With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." **18** Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." **19** The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. **20** But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur." **21** Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. **22** When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. **23** When his time of service was ended, he went to his home. **24** After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, **25** "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

? **What three characters are in focus here, and what's unique about them?**

- Elizabeth - Barren, but faithfully serving God through her trial. When she is shown grace, she does not forget the Lord but praises him for his mercy.
- Zechariah - Righteous, but fearful and doubting.
- John - the promised Elijah to come
 - Great in the sight of the Lord
 - Filled with the Holy Spirit
 - Turn many people to God
 - Prepare the way for the Lord

? **When you hear a story begin with two righteous people who are barren and advanced in years, what's the first thing that comes to mind?**

Similar situations (also with key redemptive significance):

- Sarah - Gen 18:11, Isaac
- Rebekah - Gen. 25:21, Jacob and Esau
- Rachel - Gen. 30:23, Joseph
- Manoah's wife - Judges 13:2-3, Samson
- Hannah - 1 Samuel 1, Samuel

Interesting contrast of Manoah and Hannah with the promise of Ex. 23:26; Deut. 7:14

Verse 25 - Cf. Genesis 30:23 - the same words used by the barren Rachel when she bore Joseph

? **Do you have a "lifelong" burden that you carry, similar to Zechariah and Elizabeth? How have you responded thus far?**

How was Zechariah selected to enter the sanctuary? Was this by chance?

He was "chosen by lot" - this was a random selection for the priestly service, but was fully designed by God, both to bring relief the personal pain and anguish of Zechariah and Elizabeth, but also to bring about the promised deliverance for the nation.

? **What do you think the assembly was praying for?**

Zechariah's prayer has been answered, in both senses above - personal and as a representative of his people.

? **What does the description of John the Baptist allude to?**

Verse 16-18 - Cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5; Isa. 40:3

? **If John is the one being described, what does that tell us about who Jesus is?**

? **Why do you think the angel was so hard on Zechariah? Why is he struck mute (and possibly deaf), but Mary was not when she questioned the Angel as well? What is the difference?**

Cf. Genesis 18:11 - this is the same description used of Sarah and Abraham in the account prior to the birth of Isaac. This is foundational to Zechariah's position and identity, and he had forgotten that the Lord is indeed able to work wonders.

? **What does faithful service look like for us while we're waiting on the Lord?**

? **What do you learn about God from this passage?**

? **What do you learn about yourself from this passage?**