

Untold Stories of Advent

(Elizabeth & Zacharias). Luke 1:5-25; 36-66

-Is it significant that in the greatest story of advent in Luke, that it begins with John the Baptist's conception and birth and NOT Jesus'? Interesting that Luke begins w/ John's story. Jesus is incredible & how awesome must be the woman that bore Him. So much so that Rom. Catholics permit worship of Mary (Venerate her) = **Immaculate Conception** (sinless); **Perpetual Virginity** (6 other children?? Mk 6:3); **Glorious Assumption** (body taken heaven)

But Jesus rebuked one who venerated her (Luke 11:27-28)

"While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that carried You, and the breasts at which You nursed!" ²⁸ But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and follow it." =OUCH! Jesus deflected praise toward Mary & reminded the crowd that obedience to God's Word is more important to devotion to any person (even Mary).

*John the Baptist: Jesus said he was the greatest man to ever live (Mt. 11:11)

-But, who was his mother? **Elizabeth**. No one is worshipping her??? Why Not??

What do we know of her. Why did God choose her??? **UNTOLD Stories of ADVENT: Elizabeth**

***READ Luke 1:5-25:**

"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 **They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.** – This is important b/c it was rare. The shekinah glory of God had left the temple 500 years before; mass corruption within Priesthood; it was easier to be focused on rules, regulations, political advantage, and bribery to get ahead than on faithfulness. ⁷ **And yet they had no child, because Elizabeth was infertile, and they were both advanced in years** [They could belong to our new *Legacy* Ministry ☺]. ⁸ Now it happened *that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,* ⁹ according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. (only happened once in the lifetime of a priest =great honor) ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. ¹¹ Now an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² Zechariah was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped 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 name him John.** **Notice** how God hears prayers of the righteous, and in **His** perfect timing (not ours) God answers our prayers. God could have granted them a son at anytime – **But..** our suffering, waiting, needing and then the gift of answered prayer (healing, loss, new birth, or more waiting) = ALL happen in God's timing and are never wasted; God has a bigger plan in place to accomplish X for His glory and our's (AND others') Good!! When God answers prayer it is for His glory, Our thankfulness, and for the advancement of God's Kingdom on this earth. – Are we praying like this? Expectant?? -And look how he answered Zachariah's/Elizabeth's prayer; with the Angel Gabriel. HUGE!!!

*=¹⁴ You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice over his birth. God's answer to this couple to give them a son (a legacy) was not for them only, but through their own gift, they would be a blessing to others. Their son, God's gift to them, would be used for a glorious purpose on the earth. What??

¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and **he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb.** (abortion advocates??) ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. (wow, what a legacy; fruitful ministry) ¹⁷ And *it is he who* will go as a forerunner before Him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers back to *their* children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, **to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.** -critical min. at a critical time in the history of Israel (waiting for the Messiah) and for the world waiting for the Savior.

Vs. 18: Zechariah said to the angel, “How will I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in her years.” ¹⁹ The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands 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 when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.” ²¹ And *meanwhile* the people were waiting for Zechariah, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²² But 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 *repeatedly* [2]made signs to them, and remained speechless. ²³ When the days of his priestly service were concluded, he went back home. ²⁴ Now after these days his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and she kept herself [a]in seclusion for five months, saying, ²⁵ **“This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among people.”**

Vs. 36-37: [Gabriel to Mary:] “And behold, even your relative Elizabeth herself has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called infertile is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ **For nothing will be impossible with God.**”

Vs.41: ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and **Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.** ⁴² And she cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And [2]how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, **the baby leaped in my womb for joy.**”

Vs.57: Now the time [a]had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her **neighbors and her relatives heard** that the Lord had displayed [magnified] His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. Notice that the overflow of God’s answering prayer in her life was for her to share a witness to others; to testify to God as a loving God, miracle-working God, and a God who sees & cares for the least of them.

Vs. 62: And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. ⁶³ And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all amazed. ⁶⁴ And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue *freed*, **and he began speaking in praise of God.** ⁶⁵ And fear came on all those who lived around them; and all these matters were being talked about in the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ All who heard *them* kept *them* in mind, saying, **“What then will this child turn out to be?”** For indeed the hand of the Lord was with **him.**

Would that be true of you? Can others say the same about your life? “That indeed the hand of the Lord is on your life?” We see it was with Elizabeth, with Zachariah, and w/ son John.

What do we notice in this text? What is our take away this morning for our lives?

1) When God seems silent, we are shocked when and how He answers us - as if God has been absent all along, our struggles have gone unnoticed, and our faith was futile.

-**Let us be found faithful** (Like Elizabeth), believing, hoping, and trusting in God – even when it is not popular, or when our peers/family/church members are faithless.

-Gal. 6:9 “**Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**”

2) There is no age limit in Godliness or being greatly used by God. (Young or Old, God uses people at all stages and walks of life to be used for His glory & other’s blessing).

-**ARE YOU available?** Are you usable in His hands? Are you praying to be used up for His Glory?

3) When God works, it is rarely how we thought He would. The people of Israel were waiting on deliverance from Roman occupation. Instead, they got the blessing of being delivered from their own sins and delivered from the separation of their own Covenant God.

-**Are you discerning where God is at work?** Are you asking God to show you what He is doing within you? How is changing you vs. your circumstances? Where is God at work around you and where is He inviting you into that divine work in your world?

4) When God truly works in us, there is no doubt it is God = He is still the God of the impossible. When God shows up and changes lives, they are changed for good. The evidence is overwhelming. Spiritual change is supernatural & nothing short of miraculous.

-**Is your life evident of being transformed by God?**

5) We will always be surprised at what God **invites** us into:

A. Suffering for a season - but our pain, loss, & discouragement is never wasted. It’s molding us into desperation for Him to move in us and through us. Our pain & desperation pushes us into His arms.

B. Blessing to be a blessing to others. Our gifts are never just for us to enjoy on our own. To whom much is given, much is required. Are you allowing your blessings to bless others?

C. His Presence (He’s the prize) - the result is rightfully His praise and our lives being eternally changed.

APPLICATION:

-How will you respond when God shows up to you?

-Where is your holy place that you go daily to worship and seek His presence?

-When God sees your life, does He see unfettered faithfulness (even in the midst of discouragement?) and unmet expectations of your life, hopes, and desires??