

Don't Give Up, Christmas is Coming (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."

(5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (6) And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers...." (Mal 4:5-6)

(33) The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. (Prov 16:33)

(11) ...among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matt 11:11)

1. Herod was an evil man and king who pridefully thought he was in control. But, there is another King who is really in control. The gospel of Luke is all about the true King, the Creator, the one who came to earth, the one who died, the one who was raised, the one who ascended, the one who is coming again, the one who will reign forever. These verses must be understood in light of the fact that Jesus Christ is sovereign over the world, your life, and eternity. You can trust Him no matter what happens in your life. You don't have to fear the Herod's of this world, or anyone, or anything else.
2. Marriage is a gift from God that can come with great joy. But it can also come with deep sorrows. In the midst of the joys and sorrows God is good and can be trusted completely. Jesus Christ is sovereign over every marriage, and every marriage is designed to bring glory to Him. This was true for Zechariah and Elizabeth, and it will be true of all other marriages also.
3. God declares us righteous in Christ (justification), and then we grow in Christ (sanctification). Zechariah and Elizabeth knew God and their lives were characterized by righteousness, blamelessness, holiness, godliness, Christ-likeness. They were mature followers of the one true God. God wants His children to grow in obedience like we see in these two.
4. In barrenness and brokenness we can trust God's goodness. In young age and in old age we can trust God's kindness. In plenty and in want we can trust God's provision. We should never give up no matter what is behind us or before us. Even when we are walking through difficulties we can still be faithful and do the things we know God has called us to do. God want's us to serve Him no matter what is going on in our lives.
5. God's sovereignty can even be seen in the casting of lots (or rolling of dice). There is nothing outside of God's control.
6. Prayer is central to the life of God's people both individually and corporately. Do you have times of morning and evening prayer? Do you have times when you pray with the larger family of God? Do your prayers go up to God like incense did before the altar?
7. God will often speak to us in our times of prayer. Do you only talk to God when you pray or do you listen to God as well? We don't have to live in fear because God knows us, is with us, will go before us, and loves us. Anything He allows is for our good. God always hears our prayers. His answer will sometimes be yes, sometimes be wait, and other times be no. Even when He says no it is for our good because He knows better than us about what is best. Never give up praying. Are you persevering in prayer?
8. God desires for His people to live in joy, gladness, and rejoicing. God desires for His people to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God desires for us to be controlled by the Holy Spirit and not any substance (alcohol or drugs). Do you live a Spirit-filled life?
9. Evidence of God's grace, true faith, and repentance in the life of men is that their hearts are turned toward their children. Evidence that God's grace, true faith, and repentance has taken place in a father's heart or a child's heart is when their heart is turned toward each other.
10. True greatness is ultimately judged by the Lord. Do you want to be great before God or people? Do you want to live a great life? One reason you should never give up is because God has placed greatness within you for His glory. Use it, discover it, worship God for it!
11. God uses His people to lead others to Himself. Do you pray for God to use you so that others might turn to the Lord from idols and lies? Do you ever ask God for His power to work in your life and through your life? Do you ask God to use you in such a way that people who disobey Him and live in folly turn to Him and begin to walk in wisdom?
12. God wants us to be prepared for His 2nd coming. Are you ready?
13. Even the great Christian man Zechariah had doubts at times. He was looking to himself and his wife to fulfill God's promise, but it was not up to them, but to God. God lovingly disciplined him for his lack of faith. God will sometimes discipline us when we don't walk by faith trusting in His promises. We are being disobedient when we do not trust God's promises. Even in discipline from the Lord there is grace.
14. God will take away every reproach of His people. He does this sometimes in this life, and sometimes in eternity. Hope in God.

Conclusion: Don't give up, Christmas is coming!