

The Story Part 2 - “Receiving Good News” (12-7-25)

Main Text: Luke chapter 1 and Mathew chapter 1

Introduction: The announcement and responses to the coming births of John the Baptist and Jesus.

1) Zechariah & Elizabeth (When Good News is too good to be true, or hard to believe)

- **Intro to Zechariah & Elizabeth**

Luke 1:5-7 (ESV)

[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.

Note: Similar to Abraham and Sarah, barren and advanced in years. Wanting a child, but could not have one.

- **Gabriel visits Zechariah**

vs. 8-12 - Zechariah is serving in the Temple, burning incense on behalf of the people while they pray outside.

Table of incense sits directly in front of the veil separating the mercy seat / ark of the covenant. Daily incense (prayers) offered morning and evening. Also once a year on the day of atonement blood is sprinkled on it.

When suddenly an angel appears right next to the altar of incense, scaring Him . . .

Luke 1:13-14 (ESV)

[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,

Note: While serving and offering prayers for others, he is told his prayer is heard and joy is promised!

- Next few verses (15-17) are about who this child will be - a forerunner preparing the people for Messiah

Then we come to Zechariah's response . . .

Luke 1:18-20 (ESV)

[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.”

Note: Good News is great, if you can believe it. It's hard to foster Hope in the midst of life's disappointments.

- **Zechariah and Elizabeth - conception and early pregnancy**

Luke 1:21-25 (ESV)

[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.”

Note: Being mute wasn't just punishment, it was an opportunity to wait and watch what the Lord will do.

Application: From the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth may we be encouraged to Dare to hope again

2) Mary (When good news is difficult, complicated, and maybe even impossible)

• Gabriel visits Mary

Luke 1:26-29 (ESV)

[26] In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" [29] But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

Note: Mary may be young, but she is sharp! Notice throughout the story of Jesus' birth how she ponders.

Luke 1:30-34 (ESV)

[30] And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." [34] And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

Note: Mary's like - great news, but I got questions!

Why is this different than Zechariah? She is not doubting, she's asking for instructions.

Luke 1:35-38 (ESV)

[35] And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. [36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God." [38] And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Note: With this huge blessing, comes sacrifice. Mary trusts, but she's also about to verify . . .

• Mary Visits Elizabeth

Luke 1:39-45 (ESV)

[39] In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, [40] and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. [41] And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, [42] and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! [43] And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? [44] For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. [45] And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Note: Elizabeth has been hidden for 5 months. Now Mary gets verification and miraculous encouragement!

• Mary's Song of Praise

Luke 1:46-55 (ESV)

[46] And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, [47] and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, [48] for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; [49] for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. [50] And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. [51] He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; [52] he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; [53] he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. [54] He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, [55] as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

Note: The Blessings of God in our lives, are often not just for us, but for others as well. And the biggest blessings in our lives often come with sacrifice and difficulty. May we, like Mary, celebrate along the way!

- **Mary stays with Elizabeth**

Luke 1:56-58 (ESV)

[56] And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home. [57] Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. [58] And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

Note: Mary leaves when she is 3 months pregnant and Elizabeth is 8 months pregnant. Their 3 months of joy and encouragement while walking through those early days of anticipation, now give way to facing the reality of what comes next.

- Fulfillment and Celebration for Elizabeth!
- Something a bit more challenging for Mary. It's time for her to face the music.

Application: Will we learn how to participate in the miracles of God?

May we celebrate the **Blessings**, and say yes to the **Sacrifices**

3) **Joseph** (When good news seems like bad news)

Matthew 1:18-19 (ESV)

[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

Note: Things just got real hard. The joy of the impossible, just me the realities of life.

Matthew 1:20-21 (ESV)

[20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Note: Joseph is being asked to believe in the unbelievable. To suffer the shame and embarrassment of believing what no one else will believe. To look ridiculous for the sake of his faith. To love his wife, when it appears to all others that she has betrayed that love.

How can God ask us to believe the impossible, and call us to step out in faith with costly obedience?

Matthew 1:22-23 (ESV)

[22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: [23] "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

Note: This is possible, because of the great miracle that we are not alone. God is with us!

Matthew 1:24-25 (ESV)

[24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Application: This Christmas consider again what it means to believe the unbelievable, to trust in the Lord, by believing Him and acting on His commands, no matter how hard the sacrifice may be. Remember . . .

Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.