

“Advent Week 1 - Hope” (11-26-23)

Advent - A Journey of Hope (4-week series leading to Advent Candle Service - “Song of Hope” 12/22)

Series Introduction: Advent - meaning, explanation, wreaths, candles, calendars, etc.

Today’s Intro: HOPE (Light - The Prophet’s Candle) - Today - 3 visits

1) Gabriel visits Zechariah (and Elizabeth becomes pregnant)

Luke 1:6-7 (ESV)

(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.

Angel appears to Zechariah while he is serving in the temple . . .

Luke 1:13-17 (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, (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.”

Note: 1st note on Prophecy & Hope - it’s personal & universal. This isn’t just a vague & random promise, it’s the fulfillment of prophecy . . .

- Gabriel references Elijah (the Prophet) and also Malachi 4:6 (last verse of the OT)
- The Gospels make it clear that John is a specific fulfillment of a prophecy from Isaiah - Jesus’ words . . .

Matthew 11:9-10, 13-15 (ESV)

(9) What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. (10) This is he of whom it is written, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’ . . . (13) For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, (14) and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. (15) He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Note: All prophecy is leading to Jesus. And John is the final prophet declaring Jesus’ coming . . .

Isaiah 40:1-5 (ESV)

(1) Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. (2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins. (3) A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (4) Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. (5) And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Note: Prophecy is meant to produce Hope, and look what hope does. It comforts, and it makes a clear path!

***And so the prophecy is fulfilled and Elizabeth the one who was barren becomes pregnant . . .**

Luke 1:24-25 (ESV)

(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.”

- Zechariah doesn’t believe due to his age and his wife’s barrenness (unable to speak until birth)
- Elizabeth conceives and yet sits in hiddenness & silence before the Lord (again - personal & universal)

2) Gabriel visits Mary (and Mary becomes pregnant)**Luke 1:28-33 (ESV)**

(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. (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.”

Note: Jesus - the long-awaited fulfillment of prophecy . . .

- Jesus - the Lord is salvation
- Son of God and the “seed of the woman” (Genesis 3:14-15) - note again it’s personal & universal (Eve)
- From the line of David
- House of Jacob
- Eternal Kingdom

Isaiah 9:6-7 (ESV)

(6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (7) Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Mary’s Response . . .*Luke 1:34-38 (ESV)**

(34) And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (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: See how hope works - in the face of the seemingly impossible . . .

- Hope is based upon the promises of God
- Hope is based upon the miraculous work of God
- Hope says **yes** to His miraculous plan

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.

3) Mary visits Elizabeth

Luke 1:39-45, 56 (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." . . . (56) And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

Note: Hope flourishes when shared!

God's promises are not vague and ambiguous. The Hope that God offers is pregnant with life and will give birth at the proper time.

Conclusion: May you be visited by HOPE in this season - universal, personal, and communal

Read in Closing . . .

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."

Advent Instructions:

The next several weeks leading up to Christmas will build towards our special Advent Candlelight service on Friday evening Dec 22nd.

As we look forward in hopeful anticipation to celebrate the birth of our Savior, we want to encourage you to spend a little time each day in reading and reflection.

Each of the next 4 Mondays - Weekly email:

- Scripture readings
- Questions for reflection
- Family activities
- Incorporate an advent wreath or calendar into your daily time if that is something you'd like to do as well.

We are praying that you will be richly blessed in this season as we keep our eyes on Jesus.