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## THE ACTORS OF ADVENT | ZECHARIAH (12)

November 28, 2021

Luke 1:5-25

### PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst  
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships  
To participate in God's mission to the world

### ICE BREAKER QUESTION

What is your favorite Christmas movie?

10 MIN

### WORSHIP

10 MIN

#### OPENING PRAYER

God of righteousness, hear our prayer. We come before you with zeal in our hearts seeking justice for the wronged, hope for the downhearted, and healing for the afflicted. We strain to see your face and to behold the glory of your salvation. Transform us in your image that your grace and mercy may visit us this day. Amen.

#### RESPONSIVE PRAYER—Psalm 132:1-12

<sup>1</sup>Remember, O LORD, in David's favor,  
all the hardships he endured,

<sup>2</sup>**How he swore to the LORD  
and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,**

<sup>3</sup>"I will not enter my house  
or get into my bed,

<sup>4</sup>**I will not give sleep to my eyes  
or slumber to my eyelids,**

<sup>5</sup>Until I find a place for the LORD,  
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

<sup>6</sup>**Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;  
we found it in the fields of Jaar.**

<sup>7</sup>"Let us go to his dwelling place;  
let us worship at his footstool!"

<sup>8</sup>**Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place,  
you and the ark of your might.**

<sup>9</sup>Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,  
and let your saints shout for joy.

<sup>10</sup>**For the sake of your servant David,  
do not turn away the face of your anointed one.**

<sup>11</sup>The LORD swore to David a sure oath  
from which he will not turn back:

"One of the sons of your body  
I will set on your throne.

<sup>12</sup>**If your sons keep my covenant  
and my testimonies that I shall teach them,  
their sons also forever  
shall sit on your throne."**

**SCRIPTURE  
READING**

*<sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. <sup>7</sup>But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.*

*<sup>8</sup>Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, <sup>9</sup>according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. <sup>11</sup>And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup>And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, <sup>17</sup>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."*

*<sup>18</sup>And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>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." <sup>21</sup>And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.*

*<sup>24</sup>After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, <sup>25</sup>"Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."*

**BIBLE STUDY  
40 MIN**

**Summary and Connection**

The beginning of Luke's gospel provides the details and "holy commotion" leading up to the birth of Christ that help us consider the meaning and implications of the Advent season. The four-week season of Advent starts the new church year, preparing the people of God for the celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany. Advent means "coming" and its mood is that of longing, expectation and waiting. It is during this time that we remember Jesus' first coming and anticipate his coming again as our King to make all things new.

In Luke 1:5-25 we read of Zechariah's response to the news that his son will be the forerunner, Elijah, who anticipates the coming of the King. Zechariah's honest and confused response to this news helps us learn how to receive the good news of Advent, both in his first coming and in his promise to come again.



## 1. Looking at the Bible

What does the text say?

- In addition to Luke 1:5-25, it would be helpful to read v.57-80 as well, as Luke returns to Zechariah's story and the birth of John.
- What is the significance to the fact that Herod is King of Judea at the time? Why does Luke include this information?
- Zechariah and Elizabeth are beyond childbearing years and not able to have children. This is a familiar story in the Bible both in the Old and New Testaments. Where else does this happen? And why is it significant to the story of Jesus?



## 2. Looking at Jesus

In Zechariah's song, the Benedictus, in v.68-79 we get a glimpse of the promise of the coming Savior.

- Why is everyone singing at the beginning of Luke's gospel?
- How does this song help us understand not just who John the Baptist is, but who Jesus is and what he has come to do?
- As a time of preparation, Advent invites us to make room for Jesus in every aspect of our lives. How must Zechariah make room for this news of the coming Christ? What will change in his life, and what ought to change in our lives?



## 3. Looking at our Hearts

Zechariah's response to Gabriel is telling. Even though an angel of the Lord stands before Zechariah and speaks to him, Zechariah is still not convinced that all this will happen. The promise is too far-fetched and perhaps even too personal for Zechariah to get his mind around. And the wounds he carries from his life (namely he and Elizabeth not being able to have a child) have prevented him from being able to receive this good news.

- How might we find ourselves like Zechariah, doubting God's promises to and for us?
- What do you think the significance of Zechariah's silence is for the duration of Elizabeth's pregnancy?
- How does Zechariah's circumstance show us that God not only has come to heal the world but heal our hearts as well? Can you think of ways you have found this to be true?



#### 4. Looking at our World

As Zechariah holds his son in his arms he is filled with hope not simply for his current circumstances, but now he sees that God will send his long awaited messiah and his son's birth is proof of this. Zechariah also sees that God has used the place of his deepest sorrow and wound to bring about healing and hope for the world. Zechariah knows what it is to sit in darkness and the shadow of death, but he now also knows what it is to receive God's tender mercies in spite of his sorrow.

- We often expect God to use our greatest strengths and attributes in the lives of others, but not often do we see our sorrow and wounds as opportunities for God to work and bring healing to the world. Can you think or share some time when it was your weakness that God used to bring life and light to others?

**SHARING**  
15 MIN

Share your prayer requests, thoughts, hopes and fears for the coming week, and as you do consider how this passage might give light to what you are sharing.

**KINGDOM  
PRAYER**  
15 MIN

Pray that we would see ourselves called by God.  
Include other prayer requests.

**SENDING**  
5 MIN

May the Lord God who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty, be your strength, your hope, and your joy, this day and forevermore.