

GOD WITH US #1

“Zech & Liz – Unlikely Players in the Drama of Redemption”

Things were not looking very good for the nation of Israel. In fact, they were living in a time where things seemed to be hopeless. But with God there is always hope! The time had come to begin the sequence of events that would lead up to the birth of the Savior—Jesus Christ. Today’s passage focuses on two godly people, Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were living with disappointment because they were unable to have children and in their old age, they had to accept the fact that it wouldn’t happen. However, God showed up and did the miraculous. They would have a son—John the Baptist.

#1. GOD MAY WAIT TO INTERVENE IN OUR LIFE UNTIL THINGS APPEAR TO BE HOPELESS, v. 5

- A. In the time of Herod the Great--King of Judea
- B. The Jews waited for Messiah ever since the fall
- C. The Jews were to be means of redemption
- D. The Northern Kingdom ceased to exist
- E. The Southern Kingdom was exiled, but returned
- F. The Jews were under Roman occupation
- G. The tax burden was overwhelming
- H. The priesthood had become corrupt
- I. The last prophet was Malachi--400 years ago
- J. The time of Herod was dismal

#2. GOD MAY INTERVENE IN HOPELESS SITUATIONS BY RAISING UP COMMON ORDINARY PEOPLE, vv. 5-7

- A. Zechariah means *YHWH remembers*, v. 5
- B. Zech is from the priestly line of Abijah, v. 5
- C. Zech’s wife was from the priestly line of Aaron, v. 6
- D. Zech & Liz were a godly couple, v. 6
- E. Zech & Liz were beyond the years of childbearing, v. 7
- F. Zech & Liz lived with a sense of disappointment, v. 7
- G. Zech & Liz were having an old life crisis, v. 7

#3. GOD INTERVENES IN HOPELESS SITUATIONS ACCORDING TO HIS DIVINE CLOCK, vv. 8-13

- A. Zechariah was chosen to burn incense, vv. 8-10
- B. Zechariah was gripped with fear when he saw an angel by the altar, v. 11-12
- C. Zechariah was told his prayer has been heard, v. 13
- D. Zechariah and Elizabeth will have a son John the Baptist, v. 13

#4. GOD INTERVENES IN HOPELESS SITUATIONS BY GIVING SPECIAL BLESSINGS, vv. 14-17

- A. He will be a joy & delight to you v. 14
- B. He will cause rejoicing because of his birth, v. 14
- C. He will be great in the sight of the Lord, v. 15
- D. He will never drink alcohol, v. 15
- E. He will be filled with the Spirit in the womb, v. 15
- F. He will bring people back to the Lord, v. 16
- G. He will go before the Lord in the spirit & power of Elijah, v. 17
- H. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children, v. 17
- I. He will turn disobedient people to wisdom, v. 17
- J. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord, v. 17

#5. GOD INTERVENES IN HOPELESS SITUATIONS BY DOING THE MIRACULOUS, vv. 18-22

- A. Zech’s unbelief: I’m an old man, v. 18
- B. Zech’s insensitivity: My wife is well along in years, v. 18
- C. Angelic identification: I am Gabriel, v. 19
- D. Angelic announcement: I’m sent to tell you this news, v. 19
- E. Angelic judgment: you will be mute until John is born because of your unbelief, v. 20

#6. GOD INTERVENES IN HOPELESS SITUATIONS TO EXPOSE HIS GLORY, vv. 23-25, 62-66

- A. Elizabeth became pregnant, vv. 23-24
- B. Elizabeth recognized God’s hand in this, v. 25
- C. Elizabeth’s disgrace was removed, v. 25
- D. Elizabeth’s friends were filled with awe, v. 65
- E. Elizabeth’s friends saw the Lord’s hand on the child, v. 66

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:5-25 & 58-66

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. ⁷But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years. ⁸Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. ¹¹Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. ¹⁴He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. ¹⁶Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." ¹⁸Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." ¹⁹The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." ²¹Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. ²²When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. ²³When his time of service was completed, he returned home. ²⁴After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. ²⁵"The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

⁵⁸Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. ⁵⁹On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, ⁶⁰but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." ⁶¹They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." ⁶²Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. ⁶³He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. ⁶⁶Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- #1. Can you think of a situation you experienced that appeared to be hopeless, but God intervened?
- #2. Discuss the reasons why "in the time of Herod king of Judea" was a dismal time for Israel.
- #3. Describe how you think Zechariah and Elizabeth felt about being childless and too old to have children.
- #4. God promised Abraham that he would be the founder of a great nation with many descendants (Gen 12:1-4; 15:1-6; 18:1-19), however he didn't have a son, and he and his wife were beyond the years of childbearing. Discuss the following:
 - A. What features catch your attention in the initial call of Abraham in Gen 12:1-4?
 - B. What things catch your attention in Gen 15:1-6, about Abraham's faith?
 - C. Read Gen 18:1-19 and discuss your observations regarding Abraham's and Sarah's response to having a child.
 - D. Discuss the similarities and differences between Abraham & Sarah's situation, and Zechariah & Elizabeth's situation.

#5. Why do you think God uses people to accomplish his purposes that are insignificant in the world's eyes?

#6. Why do you think the angel took Zechariah's ability to speak away? (vv. 18-20)

#7. What insights have you discovered about prayer (v. 13) from this passage?

#8. Discuss the features of John the Baptist in vv. 14-17

#9. What lesson(s) do you think Zechariah learned about faith from this experience?

#10. What is your takeaway from this teaching?

Holy Is The Lord

We stand and lift up our hands
For the joy of the Lord is our strength
We bow down and worship Him now
How great how awesome is He

And together we sing
Ev'ryone sing

Holy is the Lord God Almighty
The earth is filled with His glory
Holy is the Lord God Almighty
The earth is filled with His glory
The earth is filled with His glory

It is rising up all around
It's the anthem of the Lord's renown
It's rising up all around
It's the anthem of the Lord's renown

Mighty To Save

Ev'ryone needs compassion
Love that's never failing
Let mercy fall on me
Ev'ryone needs forgiveness
The kindness of a Saviour
The hope of nations

Chorus

Saviour He can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save
He is mighty to save
Forever Author of salvation
He rose and conquered the grave
Jesus conquered the grave

Verse 2

So take me as You find me
All my fears and failures
Fill my life again
I give my life to follow
Ev'rything I believe in
Now I surrender

Bridge

Shine your light and let the whole world see
We're singing
For the glory of the risen King, Jesus
Shine your light and let the whole world see
We're singing, For the glory of the risen King

CCLI Song # 4591782

How Great Is Our God

The splendor of the King
Clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice
All the earth rejoice
He wraps Himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
And trembles at His voice

Chorus

How great is our God
Sing with me
How great is our God
And all will see how great
How great is our God

Verse 2

And age to age He stands
And time is in His hands
Beginning and the End
Beginning and the End
The Godhead three in one
Father Spirit Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb

Bridge

Name above all names
Worthy of all praise
My heart will sing
How great is our God

Reckless Love

Verse 1

Before I spoke a word You were singing over me
You have been so so good to me
Before I took a breath You breathed Your life in me
You have been so so kind to me

Chorus

(And) O the overwhelming never-ending reckless
Love of God
O it chases me down fights 'til I'm found
Leaves the ninety-nine
I couldn't earn it I don't deserve it
Still You give Yourself away
O the overwhelming never-ending reckless
Love of God yeah

Verse 2

When I was Your foe still Your love fought for me
You have been so so good to me
When I felt no worth You paid it all for me
You have been so so kind to me

Bridge

There's no shadow You won't light up
Mountain You won't climb up
Coming after me
There's no wall You won't kick down
Lie You won't tear down
Coming after me

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE APOLOGIZE

For the technical problems we have had for the last couple of weeks. We are working very hard to fix the problems so we can provide you with a meaningful zoom experience as we worship God together.

A TEMPORARY SETBACK

We have closed our doors again in compliance with the local authorities. We are broadcasting our Sunday service from the church, but we are not open for public worship.

TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY at 6:30: a discussion of the previous sermon.

WEDNESDAY PRAYER & devotional meeting at 6:30. (access both by clicking the zoom link)

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 7:00pm on zoom

STEWARDSHIP

Thank you for financially supporting the ministry of Hillcrest Church. You can give online at the church website or mail your check to the church. This is the time to think about making a year-end contribution, which is fully tax deductible, to the following:

- Give to the general fund (our operating expenses)
- Give to the elder's fund (to assist those in financial need)
- Give to the Great Commission fund (for the missionaries of the CMA)

ANNUAL MEETING

Because of the extraordinary times we are living in due to the pandemic the District Superintendent, Wayne Spriggs, has given churches permission to suspend their bylaws regarding their annual meeting. Therefore, we will not be having our annual meeting for 2021. The present board members will continue to serve for another year and a financial report will be made available to the congregation for next year.