**LUKE: The True Story of Christmas**

**The Child before THE Child, Luke 1:1-25**

Weekend of 12.9-10.23

**WE Slide 1 KICKING OFF A NEW SERIES- end 2023, start 2024 by going through the Gospel of Luke.** I encourage you to be reading through the gospel as we go through it.

**How many of you have either done a gender reveal/been to a gender reveal? Slide 2 Kind of a neat way to let people know what you’re having/bunch of different ways to do it.** But imagine if before you’re even pregnant an ANGEL shows up to reveal the gender of your baby!! **Luke begins with 2 pre-conception gender reveals.** No 2 reveals have had more of an impact on the history/eternity of mankind than these 2. **Turn to Luke 1, pg. 1018, as we look at the 1st of these 2 and pull some biblical truth and encouragement from it for our lives.** As you turn there let me give you some BACKGROUND information.

**Slide 3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Author: Luke- a non-Jewish doctor, he wrote as a Gentile for the Gentiles.
2. Written around 60- 62 AD
3. Written to strengthen the faith of a new believer- Theophilus. **Here’s what Luke says** **READ Luke 1:1-4 Slide 4-8**
4. Luke portrays Jesus as the Son of Man- focus on His humanness. .
5. Key verse- Luke 19:10 (1:3, 4) The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost.
6. **Slide 9** Luke stresses that salvation is for all people, not just Jews. **He does that by…**
7. Translates Aramaic terms and explains Jewish customs/geography.
8. Traces Jesus’ lineage back to Adam, not Abraham.
9. Jesus birth was declared as “good news of great joy for all people”.
10. Simeon prophecies Jesus’ birth as a “light of revelation to the Gentiles”.
11. Luke includes Jesus’ command to proclaim His message to all the nations.

**So, let’s see some of what Luke has uncovered in his investigation of the life of Jesus Christ. READ Luke 1:5-7 Slide 10-13** According to Dr. Luke a critical part of Jesus’ life was something that happened before Mary had her gender reveal concerning Jesus. **It centered around a priest named Zacharias/wife Elizabeth.** They were righteous/right with God through faith but did not have any children. **What does righteous mean?**

**GOD**

1. **THE PROMISE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST’S BIRTH, Luke 1:5-25**
2. **Zacharias/Elizabeth Right with God, Yet Childless, 1:5-7**
3. They were right with God because of their faith in God.
4. OT “righteous” means God has declared the person right with Him- **Slide 14-15** Abraham, Genesis 15:6
5. NT- saved, redeemed, justified, born again, etc./different words describing the same work of God making a person right with Him.
6. Their faith in God is seen through their obedience of God.
7. They were not right with God by doing the religious rituals/traditions/good deeds, they did those things because they were right with God.
8. **HUGE DEAL-** they/we don’t do things, even religious things, to earn God’s love/acceptance.
9. He already loves us/Jesus already took our judgment for our sins; we believe that and God He makes us right with Him.
10. **IMPORTANT POINT-** Once we believe and He makes us right our entire life changes because now we obey Him, do life as He commands, not continuing in the life we had before.

**Even though they were model followers of God, God had not given them a child.**

1. Despite this they had no children- infertile and now too old to have children.
2. Then/now people often see this as God’s judgment; they’d somehow sinned, God was punishing them.
3. We need to be careful- unanswered prayer can be due to a sinful lifestyle, but it could also be due to God’s perfect plan and perfect timing as we’ll see with Zacharias/Elizabeth.

**Let’s not leave this just yet. Slide 16** Let’s personalize this so we get a feel for what they’re going through.

1. **PERSONALIZE THIS- Have you been praying for something for a long time and still have not received an answer?** Spouse/child/parent/friend to come to faith in Jesus or grow spiritually? Stable marriage/family? To have a child? To get married? Healing for self or someone else? Job change?

**What do you do when you pray/pray and God isn’t answering? Let’s see if we can learn from Zacharias. READ Luke 1:8-10 Slide 17-20** Here’s picture of where Zacharias is working. So what did Zacharias do as he waited for his answer from God? **Slide 21** **We already know from v. 6 that they lived life God’s way in all areas of life.** So they didn’t get bitter...

1. **Zacharias Remained Faithful, 1:8-10**
2. They didn’t get bitter, angry, apathetic toward God.
3. Zacharias faithfully carried out his responsibilities.
4. Shows a heart of trust in God, His will, and His goodness.
5. **PERSONALIZE THIS- Slide 22 What should we do?** We too need toshow a heart of trust in God, His will and His goodness and remain faithful to what He’s called us to do in life as we wait for His answer.

**Not saying it’s easy!** I’m sure it wasn’t easy for Z/E, but we remain focused on who God is- the good God whose timing is always perfect. **As it usually happens, when God works/answers prayer it usually comes in an UNEXPECTED way.** Look what happens as Zacharias burns the incense in the Holy Place. **READ Luke 1:11-17 Slide 23-30 Talk about UNEXPECTED…an angel brought God’s long-awaited answer!!**

1. **An Unexpected Answer, 1:11-17**
2. An angel brought God’s long-awaited answer.
3. God would give them a son, but not just any son. **What the angel says about him is UNEXPECTED and why Luke included it in his letter to Theophilus.**
   1. Through John God will fulfill prophecies made 400 & 700 years earlier!!
   2. Would bring joy/gladness to him/Elizabeth, many to rejoice- those who understood John’s role.
   3. Considered great in God’s eyes.
   4. Even before his birth he would be under the power of the Holy Spirit- the “perfect” kid.
   5. Turn many Jewish people back to God- Israel as a nation was religious, but God knew their hearts were not for Him. John would have the privilege of bringing many of them back to God.
   6. Forerunner before God to restore families, individuals, and prepare people for the Lord- Jesus.
      1. Like Elijah he would stand strong for God against corrupt/evil political leaders.
      2. Fulfill Malachi 4:5-6- turn hearts of fathers toward children; **last week-** those who truly follow God understand the importance of loving relationships in their homes/with their kids.
      3. He would encourage people to repent of their sin and turn back to God.
      4. He would prepare the way for Jesus Christ- prophecy of Isaiah 40:1, 700 years earlier.

**This was so UNEXPECTED- an angel bringing the answer while he’s alone burning incense.** Not to mention hearing that John would be the one to fulfill God’s centuries-old promises to save mankind. **Why not just have Elizabeth get pregnant and have that as your answer? Because that’s normal and God’s answers are typically unexpected so only He can be credited with the answer.** Again, let’s personalize this; **Slide 31** read anywhere in the Bible…

1. **PERSONALIZE THIS- When has God ever answered prayer/worked in people’s lives that would be considered “normal” by people?** God never seems to do anything the way we would do it.
   1. God’s ways are not our ways, Isaiah 55:9
   2. God always works so He gets glory/praise/draw people to Him.
   3. Whatever you’re praying for/waiting for you can figure God is not going to answer it in a way that seems normal to you/me, how you/I would answer it.

**Well, Zacharias has to be pumped- he’s going to have a son, finally!** Let’s see what he has to say about this UNEXPECTED answer. **READ Luke 1:18-25 Slide 32-39 Did anybody see that coming? Zacharias expresses doubt/wants some other proof.** What?! There’s an angel, GABRIEL, standing in front of him! **How could he doubt? Easy…**

1. **Zacharias’ Doubt, 1:18-25**
2. We’ll always doubt when we focus on our circumstances, not on God’s ability and promise.
3. God sending Gabriel should have been proof enough.
4. As a discipline to teach him to not doubt God, God took away his voice during pregnancy- every time he tried to say something he’d not only be reminded of his failure to believe, but also remember God’s promise and choose to not doubt God’s ability and promise.
5. God kept His promise and Elizabeth became pregnant.
6. **PERSONALIZE THIS-** **Slide 40 What is keeping you from believing God will answer your prayer?**
7. Don’t focus on you or the circumstances around you.
8. Focus on God’s ability and promises He’s given you.

**Well, you’ll have to come back next week to find out whether Zacharias gets his voice back or not. Better yet, commit to read through Luke and you’ll find out for yourself. For now, what are some things we can TAKEAWAY from these events? Slide 41** First, for any of this to be true in your life you have to allow God to make you right with Him.

**YOU TAKEAWAYS-**

1. **Accept God’s offer to make you right with Him.**

* Your sin, breaking God’s law, keeps you from God/heaven.
* God’s judgment on your sin is eternity in hell.
* Jesus, God the Son, took God’s judgment for you.
* Tell Him you believe He did that for you.
* Ask God to forgive you and make you right with Him.

**For we who, like Zacharias/Elizabeth, are waiting on God to answer our prayers let’s learn from Zacharias… Slide 42**

1. **While you wait for God’s answer.**

* Keep praying for God’s will to be done.
* Don’t get bitter, angry, or apathetic toward God.
* Trust God, His will, and His goodness and stay faithful to what you know to do.
* When tempted to doubt by looking at your circumstances focus on God’s ability and promises.

**PODCAST- What to do when you’re tempted to doubt God.** Luke 1:1-25, Genesis 15:6