

“Christmas Worship” Advent Series

Zechariah’s Song

Read Luke 1:18-22, 57-79.

Background:

- Zechariah was an elderly priest who was visited by an angel while serving in the Temple. The angel announced good news. He and his wife would finally have a child in their old age. The boy, John, would 1) be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, 2) reconcile families in Israel, and 3) prepare the way for the coming of God.
- The nation of Israel was back in the Promised Land after generations living in exile. But things were not as they should be. They were still a conquered people, living under the rule of the ruthless Romans. What’s more, while the Temple had been rebuilt, God’s presence had never returned. God was distant and God’s people were lost in their sins.

Explore Together:

1. What detail from this text stands out to you? Why?
2. Why is Zechariah chastened for asking for some proof to back up the angel’s words? How does his period of silence make his song all the more powerful and significant?
3. Pay close attention to the verbs in Zechariah’s song. What do the activities God takes part in reveal about God’s character and how he engages with us his creation?
4. In his song, Zechariah articulates his greatest hope for himself, his family, and his people. What do you think Zechariah means by “that we... might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days”?

Apply It:

- ◆ What is your greatest hope for yourself, your family, and your people?

- ◆ What does it look like for you to “sit in darkness”? Where do you see the shadow of death looming in your community?

- ◆ What would it mean for the sun (or maybe the Son) to rise and shine in those places? How might you share that hope with someone else who is well-aware of the darkness?

Luke 1:18-22, 57-79 (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 see, 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." 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...

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. 59 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, 60 but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." 61 And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." 62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. 67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; 72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."