

Luke 1:1-38, Matthew 1:18-25

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[0 : 0 0] But I appreciate those who come and it is a joy gathering together. Take your Bibles. It's going to be the Gospel according to Luke. Luke chapter 1. Luke chapter 1. Last week we introduced this Christmas series and we're going to continue that on.

Last week we heard or we saw the grand narrative of Scripture. So we took some time and we ran through thousands of years of history.

We asked about the Old Testament and their fulfillment when we get into the covenantal promises of God.

The God's covenant starting all the way back in the garden with Adam and Eve. And that consistent theme of the one that would come and the one that we're looking to revelation.

We're not looking at a multitude of people or we're not looking at a family of people. We're looking but for one Savior. And we saw that grand narrative of Scripture. All of Scripture.

[1 : 0 2] The entirety of the Bible. About but one person. That is Jesus Christ. And we looked at that last week. We're going to begin to narrow our focus a little bit this week.

Last week we looked at multiple passages this week. I'll ask you to go ahead and mark the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew chapter 1. Because we will turn to do it before we stand up.

And so we're going to speak in conservative order. Those angelic announcements immediately before the coming of Christ.

So our message this morning will be titled Heaven's Herald. Heaven's Herald. The verb is to be something that is not the noun.

It is not the angel that is being sent. So we're not focused on the angel. We're not focused on the angel.

[1 : 5 9] We're not focused on the angel. We're looking at the world of heaven. What heaven is declaring among man. What he is declaring to us and to them at that time. So if you are physically able and desire to do so this morning.

If you'll join with me as we stand together. We're going to start in Luke chapter 1. We're going to read verses 1 through 38. Our primary text will be in verse 5 through 38. But we'll read verses 1 through 4 for context.

And then we'll go to Matthew chapter 1. And we'll pick up in verse 18 through 25. The word of God says. In the days of Herod.

King of Judea. There was a priest named Zacharias. Of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughter of Aaron. And her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God.

Walking blamelessly in all the commandments. And requirements of the Lord. But they had no child. Because Elizabeth was barren. And they were both advanced in years. Now it happened that while he was performing.

[3 : 24] His priestly service before God. In the appointed order of his division. According to the custom of the priestly office. He was chosen by Lot. To enter the temple of the Lord. And burn incense.

And the whole multitude of the people. Were in prayer outside. At the hour of the incense offering. And an angel of the Lord. Appeared to him standing. To the right of the altar of incense. And Zacharias was troubled.

When he saw the angel. And fear gripped him. And the angel said to him. Do not be afraid Zacharias. For your petition has been heard. And your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son.

And you will give him the name John. You will have joy and gladness. And many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord. And he will drink no wine or liquor.

And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. While yet in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel. Back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner. Before him in the spirit and power of Elijah.

[4 : 23] To turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children. And the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous. So as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Zacharias said to the angel.

How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man. And my wife is advanced in years. The angel answered and said to him. I am Gabriel. Who stands in the presence of God.

And I have been sent to speak to you. And to bring you this good news. And behold. You shall be silent. And unable to speak. Until the day when these things take place. Because you did not believe my words.

Which will be fulfilled in their proper time. And the people were waiting for Zacharias. And were wondering at his delay in the temple. But 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. And when the days of his priestly service were ended. He went back home.

[5 : 18] After these days. Elizabeth his wife became pregnant. And she kept herself in seclusion. For five months saying. This is the way the Lord has dealt with me. In the days when he looked with favor upon me.

To take away my disgrace among men. Now in the sixth month. The angel Gabriel was sent from God. To a city in Galilee called Nazareth. To a virgin.

Engaged to a man whose name was Joseph. And of the descendants of Mary. And the virgin's name. Or descendants of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in. He said to her.

Greetings favored one. The Lord is with you. But she was very perplexed at this statement. And kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. And the angel said to her.

Do not be afraid Mary. For you have found favor with God. And behold. You will conceive in your womb. And bear a son. And you shall name him Jesus. He will be great. And will be called the son of the most high.

[6 : 13] And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And his kingdom will have no end. And Mary said to the angel. How can this be since I am a virgin?

And the angel answered and said to her. The Holy Spirit will come upon you. And the power of the most high will overshadow you. And for that reason. The holy child will be called the son of God.

And behold. Even your relative Elizabeth. Has also conceived a son in her old age. And she who was called barren. Is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said.

Behold the bond slave of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her. Go with me now to the gospel of Matthew. Pick up in verse 18.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph. Before they came together. She was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

[7 : 13] And Joseph her husband being a righteous man. And not wanting to disgrace her. Plan to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this. Behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

Saying Joseph. Son of David. Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child who has been conceived in her. Is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son.

And you shall call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins. Now all this took place to fulfill. What was spoken by the Lord through the prophet. Behold the virgin shall be with child.

And shall bear a son. And they shall call his name Emmanuel. Which translated means. God with us. And Joseph awoke from his sleep. And did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

And took Mary as his wife. But he kept her a virgin. Until she gave birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. Let's pray. Father we thank you for this day.

[8 : 10] We thank you for the glorious opportunity. We have of gathering together. Father. And we pray that through your power and presence. Lord that you would give us understanding now.

Give us the ability to see. And to hear. And to know what it is your word declares to us. And we give you the glory for it. And we ask it in Christ's name.

Amen. You may be seated. While I do count it as a great privilege. To stand before you with a deeper tone of voice than normal.

I do apologize. That my voice does not sound the same. I'm firmly blessed. By church members who keep me in cough drops. So now I have one of these good Vicks cough drops in my mouth.

That seems to suck the oxygen out of you. But you cannot cough. Because it takes your breath away. So hopefully the Lord will spare us that. Thank you Miss Sarah for always having those on hand for me.

[9 : 07] I keep a stock of them in my desk drawer. But it is a joy to be able to look at these passages together. Passages which are probably very, very familiar to us. Passages which we have read a number of times.

And it seems that we read them each year at this time. As I pray through where the Lord would want us to be during our Christmas season. Often I think, well Lord I just don't want to go back to the same passages.

Because that's quote unquote what I've always done. But yet when we go to them with fresh eyes. And we go to them with a renewed spirit. We are equally astounded at the reality they contain within them.

The reality that for over 400 years God has been silent. That since the book of Malachi was recorded. And the prophet Malachi stood before the people of God.

Following the Babylonian captivity. Since the organization that we have recorded for us. In the book of 1st and 2nd Chronicles. And the ordering of the nation to be able to return.

[10 : 06] To priestly worship with the Levites. And everybody in position. Since Malachi had chastised the people. And declared that there would be one who would come as a forerunner.

Before the Savior. Before the Messiah. On that great and terrible day of the Lord. That we have no recorded word. Now surely in our scripture. We can turn the page of scripture.

And we close Malachi. And usually there is a piece of paper that says the New Testament. And we turn it. And there we have the book of Matthew. That one page.

Which contains over 400 plus years of history. In which there is no recorded word of God. No recorded prophetic message from God. No ordained prophet that is raised up by the Lord God Almighty.

God is silent. For 400 years. God's people have entered into a time. Of routine and order and custom. Ordained routine and order and custom.

[11 : 06] Sure because we have the books of 1st and 2nd Chronicles. Which are instrumental in reestablishing the order. According to David's planning and organization.

And the temple worship. So we do not shake our heads. And say oh they've become so monotonous. They were doing. As Henry Blackaby once said. Just do the last thing God told you to do.

Keep doing it until he tells you to do something else. And that's exactly what they were doing. Some. Sure. Because it was habit. That's what they had been born into.

That was the ritual. That was the way life was always. Had always been. We cannot. Call them guilty of anything other than being.

Human. For there are many within the pews of our church. That that's all they've ever known. Is the blessing of being connected to church. And we pray that they would know. What it means to have a real walking relationship.

[12 : 06] With Jesus Christ. As a pastor. One of my greatest concerns. Was for my own children. Because of the reality. That especially from our two youngest children. For the entirety of their life.

I had been but nothing but a pastor. Their dad has been their only pastor. Save our oldest one for a short time. When he did not live anywhere around here. And so I'll look at each one of our children.

Say I don't have to be your pastor. I'm your dad. And encourage them. And want them to be connected to a church. That is for their sake. Not for my sake. But it is something that we find.

The Jewish people do. Over and over and over. As the years and the centuries go by. That God is silent. And we turn the page. And we find the book of Matthew.

Introducing us into a lineage. But the gospel of Luke. Introduces us to the church. The next step in history. Malachi tells us. The priests are coming in. Offering sacrifice. Luke tells us.

[13 : 02] Zacharias comes in the appointed order. Of his division. We find that appointed order. By the way of Abijah. Found in the book of. Anybody want to guess? First Chronicles.

And it is the very order. That is established. The moment they come out of Babylonian captivity. That had been ordained. By David. Even before the construction.

Of the temple. Of the temple. And reintroduced. With the construction. Of the new temple. Following the Babylonian captivity. And so they are just doing.

What they have always done. For 400 years. And then in the space. Of a little under two years. Heaven cannot be silent.

Think about it. For 400 years. There is nothing. And then in the space. Of a little under 200 years. The angels. Are talking.

[14 : 01] All the time. Zacharias. Meets an angel. Inside the temple. Mary. Has the same angel. Gabriel. Meet her in Nazareth.

Joseph. Has an angel. Appeared to him. In a dream. We don't know if it is Gabriel. Or another one. Because that one is not named. The shepherds. That are out in the field. Watching their sheep by night. There is a whole multitude.

Of heavenly hosts. Of angels. That are proclaiming. The heavens are declaring. The work of God. That is recorded. In the book of Numbers. As the wise men. Or the Magi. Come from the east.

And they traverse. For a number of years. To get to where this child. By this time. Is living. The silence is broken. And the word. Is being declared.

And God. Will not be silent. Any longer. For what he is about to do. Is what he has always said. He would do. So I want you to see. I want you to focus with me. For just a little while. On this. Word.

[15 : 00] That heaven declares. Over and over. First. We see. This is a commissioned. Word. That is important. By the way. It is a commissioned.

Word. It is a commissioned. Word. It is a small. New Testament. Writing. Of the letter of Jude. Right before the book. Of Revelations. In which. Jude. Mentions.

In the first. Few verses. As he is declaring. The judgment of God. Upon the sins. And disobedience. Of man. Jude also. Mentions. Those angels. Who step out of their.

Stepped out of their. Realm. In the days past. That God has now. Reserved. Until the day of judgment. He is referring. To those angels. Who had stepped out.

Of their proper realm. Immediately before. The days of. Noah. Peter. Mentions the same thing. In the book. Of second Peter. I believe it is. A second chapter.

[15 : 54] Of second Peter. Maybe somewhere around. Verse four. I could be. A mistake in there. Where he speaks. Of the same reality. These angels. That stepped out. Of their proper realm. God has brought.

Into judgment. And he correlates. In both passages. In second Peter. And Jude. The correlation. Of the judgment. Upon the angels. Is. Judgment of Sodom. And Gomorrah. That angels.

Do not just have the freedom. To do whatever they want. Whenever they want. And those. That choose to walk in rebellion. To step. Quote unquote. Out of their realm. Into our realm.

Whenever they decide to. Or however they want to. God. God. Immediately. Places judgment upon them. There's no grace extended. There's no mercy there. That's reserved for humanity.

In scripture. It's clear. That it is a. Judgment. Unto eternal destruction. So when we see the angels. Appearing here.

[16 : 49] We know that the angels. Did not say. Hey now would be a good time. Because it tells us. That an angel. Of the Lord. In each passage.

An angel. Of the Lord. Appeared to the right side. Of the altar of incense. An angel. Of the Lord. Appeared to her. An angel. Of the Lord. Appeared. To Joseph. In the dream. And in each instance.

We are told. That these angels. Have been sent. From the Lord. Gabriel says. I was sent here. To proclaim this message. To you. To Zacharias.

Gabriel tells Mary. I have been sent. To proclaim this message. To you. Now. That wording. Angel. Literal translation.

Just means. Messenger. This is why. When we look. In the book. Of revelations. And we. See that John. On the island. Of Patmos. Turns. And he sees the one. Who is so.

[17 : 45] Splendor. In his appearance. Holding the angels. Of the seven churches. In his hand. And that is Christ. And Christ says. That the stars. Are the angels. And the angels. Are the messengers. What he's referring to.

Is that. He. Is the angels. In his hand. The messengers. Or the pastors.

Or the preachers. To those churches. That the angels. Come with. Not a. Personal message. Or even. An individual message. That the only thing.

That the angels. Can declare. Is that which they have been. Told. To declare. They have no. True. Freedom. In the message. They bring. They are bound.

To deliver the message. They have been sent. To bring. Which means. What we have. The angels proclaiming. Is the very word of God. Being declared. To the people.

[18 : 41] Of God. That God is. Longing. For man. After so many years. Of silence. And so many years. Of preparation. To know. What is about to transpire.

What is about to happen. That God commissions. These. Angelic beings. To declare. This message. At this time. In history. For his glory. That God has.

Ordained. This message. And it's a message. That was. Rather. Unexpected. Though it should not have been. We'll get to that.

In just a moment. And it caught them off guard. But it is the. Word of God. With the. Backing. Of the Lord God. Himself. As he had sent the angels. From his presence.

To his people. With his message. It is a commissioned. Message. God. Wants. People. To know. I'm astounded. At the entirety.

[19 : 36] Of the Christmas event. Just like I am. And everything else. In scripture. At the reality. That it is not. The initiative. Of man. That brings it about. But rather. It is the initiative.

And the acting work. Of God. That man. Would have continued. Doing what they had. Always done. At least. For the last. 400 years. Had God. Not interrupted.

That. By sending. His angel. With a commissioned. Message. Everything. Changed. In a moment. In Zacharias. Life. Because the word. Of God. Came to him. With the authoritative. Purpose.

That it carried. That life. Was interrupted. We notice. There are two. Telling. Things here. With the foretelling.

Of the birth. Of the. The Baptist. Even before. John. The Baptist. Is conceived. The angel. Declares. That it will be. In the womb. That John.

[20 : 30] The Baptist. Will be anointed. With the Holy Spirit. Now think about that. Just for a moment. It was before. His conception. That he has declared. That he would be anointed.

By the Holy Spirit. And it was in the womb. That he received. That anointing. Of the Holy Spirit. Possibly. You know. When he did. It is when Mary. Walked into the presence. Of Elizabeth. And Elizabeth said. Blessed is she.

Who believes. In the word of the Lord. And the baby. Within her womb. Leapt. For the Holy Spirit. Filled her womb. At that moment. And you have. What is referred to. As the Magnificent. Of Mary. Where she sings this song.

By the way. Is the only other. The last recorded wording. We have. Of the mother of Christ. There. This wonderful. A declaration of praise. Of the humility. Of her own estate. And the blessedness. Of the favor.

That is there. As it pertains. To her conception. And that we have her. Speaking later on. About her son. But here. As it pertains. To her conception. But yet. What we find.

[21 : 23] Here. Is that Holy Spirit. Anointing. Comes. Not because. John the Baptist. Does anything good. Nor because. He does anything bad. There's neither. Work. Nor effort. Involved in any of it.

It is the ordaining. Purposes of God. To anoint him. And then. We are told. That Mary. Herself. Would be overshadowed. By the Holy Spirit. That is.

The work. Will be completely. And absolutely. Of the Lord God Almighty. And it is. A commissioned word. That declares. He is about to bring. About his promises.

Secondly. We see. That it is. A consistent word. It is. A consistent word. The word of God. Is absolutely. Consistent.

In every way. And in every part. And in every portion. One of the greatest. Apologetics. For scripture. Is the. Reality. That while it was. Pinned by. Various authors. At various times.

[22 : 17] In various places. Throughout various. Life circumstances. In different cultures. In different settings. It is absolutely. Consistent.

It is. The consistency. Of scripture. That reaffirms. Our faith. In it. We have already. Said. That 400 years.

Had transpired. And God. Has been silent. We were making. Our way. Through the books. Of first. And second. Chronicles. On Sunday nights. And Wednesday nights.

I let you know. Those of you. That were with me. I let you know. That in the Jewish. Scripture. Those are the last. Two books. In their. Scripture. Their old. What we refer to. As the Old Testament.

They don't have. A New Testament. So in the Jewish. Scriptures. The last two books. Of their scripture. So the last thing. They would have read. Would have been. Concerning the order. Of the priest. And the order.

[23 : 12] Of the worship. And the order. Of all those things. And the very next thing. That we have. Happening historically. Is that order. Taking place. In the gospel. Of Luke. In our Bibles.

We have. The prophet Malachi. And if you were to go. To Malachi. And you read. The last prophetic. Word of God. It is declaring. That there would be. One who comes. In the spirit. And power of Elijah.

To prepare. The way of the Lord. And that he would. Turn the hearts. Of the children. Back to the fathers. And the hearts of the fathers. Back to the children. And he would be. A forerunner. It is not coincidental.

That the very next thing. God says. The very next thing. That God says. Through his angelic. Messenger. Is that the one. That will be conceived.

In her. Will be the one. Who comes in the power. And spirit. Of the Lord. And it is he. Who will come. In the spirit of Elijah. To prepare the way. Of the coming Messiah. Maybe you have met.

[24 : 07] Someone who can have. A conversation with you. Abruptly. In that conversation. I am kind of that way. Sometimes they tell me. I am a cliffhanger. Normally at home. They say. You just kind of. Don't finish your thought. I think maybe it is.

Because I stand before people. And I finish. Try to finish my thoughts. All the time. So sometimes. My brain kind of cuts off. When I am not up here. So they say. You just kind of. Leave us hanging. And we are all looking at you. Going what was the rest of that.

That he wanted to say. I was all. You should figure it out. From there. But maybe you meet people. Who just kind of. Stop those thoughts. And then come back. Maybe 30 or 45 minutes later. And keep saying. The same thing. You are like. Wow. They never missed a beat.

They just keep the same conversation. That is going along. But have you ever met someone. Who could say something. And then 400 years. Kind of leave you there. And then after 400 years. Pick it up.

And say it again. Oh as I was saying. Back before any of you were born. As I was saying. It is he who is going to come. In the power and spirit of Elijah. To prepare the way of the Lord. It is the consistency.

[25 : 00] Of scripture. And by the way. We look at this context. And the reason we read. Verses 1 through 4. Of the gospel of Luke. Is because we want to know. Who the author is. I don't want to get you into all that. Because we are not going through it.

But Luke is the beloved physician. Right. Traveling companion to Paul. But he is also writing. To the most excellent Theophilus. Who is more than likely. A Roman governmental official. By the time we get to the book of Acts.

And he is writing to the same person. His faith has probably cost him. His position. Because he is no longer. Most excellent Theophilus. He is just Theophilus. Theophilus means lover of God. So. But to refer to him as most excellent.

Was to really ascribe to him. A position of governmental authority. And so don't think it is coincidental. That it is Luke. The beloved physician. Who highlights the reality. That Mary is a virgin. Because the physician knows.

Hey this is an impossibility. Or that it is Luke. The physician. Who is writing to most excellent Theophilus. The Roman official. Who says that it was in the days. Of Herod. And he begins to connect things.

[25 : 56] As they were politically. And see how God uses these people. And what we see is consistency of this. Even the authors. That God is using. To bring about this. But not just Malachi.

And Luke. And all these things. And even Matthew consistent. But what God is declaring. With the coming of John the Baptist. And the coming of the Savior. And the coming of the Messiah. Is the very thing that God has been declaring. Since the Garden of Eden.

God is making a promise. Brother Ivan read the promise. Recorded for you. In Isaiah. It is Matthew. Who tells us. That when the announcement. Is made to Joseph. It was to fulfill.

The prophetic announcement. That was made by Isaiah. In Isaiah 7. And again. Look at the consistency of scripture. It is Matthew. Who points that. Why? Because who is Matthew writing to? Matthew is writing to the Jewish people.

With a Jewish mindset. Luke is writing to. Most excellent Theophilus. A Roman official. Mark is writing to. Gentiles or Greeks.

[26 : 56] John is writing to. A worldwide church. And just to be. Straight. Honest. The Greeks and the Roman officials. Could care less.

What an Old Testament prophet. Had said. About the coming of the Savior. But the Jewish people. Absolutely did. So it is Matthew. Writing to the Jewish people. Who highlighted. That this is the fulfillment.

Of the prophecy. That we have been looking for. And over and over again. We are reaffirmed. Of the consistency. Of the word of God. Even the people.

That God uses. To proclaim that word. He is consistent. And he is saying. The same thing. To Zacharias. For the Savior.

And then he leaves there. And he says. To Mary. And then to Joseph. He is going to be. The Messiah.

[27 : 52] Over and over again. The word of God is consistent. Friend. Listen to me. The word of God. Is not just consistent. Around Christmas. The word of God. Is true. And consistent. At all times.

It does not vary. It does not shift. Back and forth. It does not toss. To and fro. Like the waves of the sea. Rather it holds. A true course. And if someone. Stands before you.

With a new revelation. Of scripture. I've said this before. Then it is a. Mis-revelation. Of scripture. If it is not consistent. With what the word of God. Has always said. Then it is nothing.

At all. That God is saying. If you find it. Being inconsistent. With what is contained. In the 66 books. Of the Bible. From Genesis. To Revelations. Then. By all means.

Do your moral obligation. To defend. And to rebuke. And sometimes. To flee. From that. Revelation. For the word of God. Is consistent.

[28 : 46] In all points. At all times. It has but one grand theme. And the theme. Is never man-centered. That theme. Is centered around. Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior. Who came to redeem us.

And to set us free. That is the herald of heaven. Number three. We see that this is a comforting word. It is a comforting word.

One reality. That we find in scripture. Is that anytime someone. Is in the presence. Of the Lord God. Or in the presence. Of one of the angels. Of the Lord God. That there is an. A sense.

Of one's. Immortality. Involved. There is a dread. And a fear. There is an awe. And a splendor. We see it.

In the Old Testament. Anytime someone. Is in the presence. Of God. They fall on their faces. We see it. Repeated in the New Testament. When angelic beings. Are. Revealed to mankind.

[29 : 45] In the Old. And the New Testament. There is this sense. Of dread. And judgment. That is impending. For the. The holiness of God. Permeates that place. And yet.

The repeated theme. With Zacharias. With Mary. And with Joseph. Is. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. It is a theme.

Of comfort. That the word. Of God. Comes to them. We will get to. The difficult part. In just a moment. Rather. Unexpectedly. Though God has. Said for years.

That this is how. It is going to be. In the most unlikely. Of places. Zacharias. Is held a little bit. More accountable. The question. Has been asked me. Mary doubted. As much as Zacharias.

Why did Zacharias. Get kind of rebuked. And told. Not kind of rebuked. He was rebuked. Why was he made mute. Until these things. Came about. And Mary. Asked kind of the same question. How is it going to be. And nothing was said to her.

[30 : 40] Well there is. Kind of a two fold answer. I will give them to you. Really quickly here. Zacharias says. That is never going to happen. Because I am old. And my wife is advanced in years. Remember man. I have told you this before.

Zacharias never calls his wife old. The angel calls her old. But he does not. He says she is advanced in years. That is a wise man right there. But. So he looks at the angel.

And says. This will never happen. I am an old man. And she is. Well she is no spring chicken anymore. She is advancing in years. You know. And so it will never be. So the angel.

Calls him out. On it. Mary. On the other hand. When she questions. If we were to look at. In the original language. The original language is.

I believe this is going to happen. But can you tell me. How it is going to happen. How is it going to happen. For I am a virgin. It is not a question of doubt.

[31 : 39] But a question of means. So that is one reason. The other reason is. That Zacharias is. According to the order. He is a priest. And he is in the temple. Right. So now he is a man.

Whose job. He is righteous. We are told that. He and his wife. Both are righteous. And they are walking in the ways of the Lord. Understand the ways of the Lord. He gets a once. Literally a once in a lifetime. Opportunity. There are so many priests.

By this time. That if you ever get your lot drawn. To burn incense. In the temple. You never get a chance. To do that again. So he has a once in a lifetime. Opportunity. To go in.

And burn incense. And the altar of incense. If you were to go read. The Old Testament. By the way. This is why your Old Testament. Is important. The Old Testament. Tells us. That the altar of incense. Was to be a physical.

Representation. Of the prayers. Of God's people. Ascending. Into his. Throne room. Right. That as they burned incense. They were literally. Looking. At God.

[32 : 33] Declaring to them. I hear your prayers. And as the. Incense went up. And he was burning it. He was seeing. Before. The people are all.

Outside what? Praying. Right. So he's at the hour. Prayer. Watching something. Physically represented. Before him. That says. God hears our prayers. And the angel says. God has heard your prayers. And Zacharias.

There's no way. And he who has been entrusted. With much. Much has been expected. So be careful. How we respond.

To the word of God. Because while it comes. With comfort. It also. Comes with accountability. I encourage people. To read the word of God. All the time. I encourage them.

To study the word of God. And I want you to know. The word of God. But friend. Listen to me. One of the things. That I have found out. And maybe I'm not the only one. But one of the things. I have found out. I remember.

[33 : 26] When I first came to Christ. Such childlike faith. And I cast my life. And all my hope. And all my ambitions. And all my desires. Upon him. And I say. Lord. I long for you.

To show me your glory. And he would show me his glory. Sometimes in supernatural ways. Sometimes in magnificent ways. And sometimes. Sometimes. In astounding ways. Things that if I were to tell you.

You'd probably think I was crazy. And it's okay. And over and over again. He would just reaffirm for me. That he was there. Constantly pushing me.

To fall in love with him. More and more. Each and every day. And I would get into his word. But here's the rest of my testimony. The more I got into the word. The more I got to understand. Who God is. And the more I got to understand.

The character of God. And the more I could trust. The promises of God. But the more I understood. What God has promised me. The less he had to do. Supernaturally. Because he had already told me. Verbally.

[34 : 22] So now. I don't need a burning bush. Because I have a written word. God. And that is.

He doesn't have to do the astounding. Because I have the responsibility. Knowing. God. This is according to your character. And so I'm going to take you. At your word. I may feel like I'm too old.

For this to happen. I may feel like this is too much. I may feel like this is an impossibility. Because of my circumstances. But God. I don't need you to validate it. By sending something. In some unlikely way.

I need the validation. All the validation I need. Is written right here. And God. It's consistent with who you are. So Lord. I'm going to take you. At your word. See.

There's. The comfort of it. But there's also. Since I know it. Or I'm becoming to know it. A little bit. I don't know all of it. I'm expected to live.

[35 : 20] According to it. Some of you say. Oh. Well. Okay. Then I just won't read the Bible. And God will keep doing the supernatural. Don't. Taunt. The Lord God.

Don't live in a dating. Don't live in a dating relationship with Jesus. When he wants to be wed to you. And he wants you to know him. That he may be fully known. It was wonderful to date my wife.

Whenever we were teenagers. Oh. I loved every time. I could go pick her up. And I'd go get her. And I would pull up. She just lived. A couple of miles down the road from my house. And I would just fly down this road.

And I'd pick her up. And carry her out on dates. And we would drive around in all my beat up cars. But her mom and dad said she had to be back at a certain time. So I'd take her back home. You don't know if you've ever met my in-laws. They're a little bit older now.

But back then they were. You know. Anyway. So I would drop her off on time at home. And then I had to be home at a certain time. The dates were awesome. It was great to date. It was awesome to get to know her.

[36 : 18] And to ride beside her. And I got a little secret for you. When we were dating. You know. I don't know what it is. Something. And it still happens today. Every time we'd go somewhere. Drive down the road. She'd be asleep. So I learned to ride in silence all the time.

She sat beside me asleep. Even today. Like one of my comfort. I know this is kind of maybe too much information. One of my like most comforting touches. Is my wife holding my arm asleep on it.

Because she used to hold my arm. And fall asleep. Primarily because none of my vehicles had heat. And they were freezing. And she was kind of bundled up. And she would just lay on my arm and sleep. And that's how we drove. And I'd go.

I'd wake her. Hey. Let's go eat. And then she'd sleep on the way back home. But I loved it. Every moment of it. But that fails in comparison. To being married. There's nothing like the marriage.

Right? Don't let God woo you. And all you get to see is the supernatural. But you never are wed to him. Being in your word. There's responsibility that comes.

[37 : 17] With marriage. There's responsibility that comes with that. There's responsibility that comes with being in that word. But it's worth it. It's worth it. See there's a comforting word given to them.

Fourth and finally. It's a challenging word. Do you notice that in each one of these situations. It's a challenging word. Zacharias is told.

I just introduced it a little bit. That God is going to do something. And Zacharias says. How can this be? That is a consistent question. How can this be? How can this be? The comfort of the word does not remove the challenge from it.

While we are told not to fear. What the word of God declares to us. There is still the challenge. That it's going to be beyond our abilities. Zacharias had long ago.

Went past the limit. How can this be? For nothing is impossible with God. With marriage. How can this be?

- [38 : 17] For nothing is impossible with God. There's the challenge of accepting the reality. That what God has declared is going to happen. Even in light of the seemingly impossible circumstances surrounding it.
- And then Joseph being a righteous man. Planned to put Mary away secretly. I mean can you think about that for just a moment. And then in a dream. An angel appears to Joseph. And tells him the most unlikely stories. For one because they're from Nazareth. You know the testimony of scripture right? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?
- Nazareth is like. The backwoods of the backwoods. Nobody even likes Nazareth. There's nothing clean in Nazareth.
- But there's a young lady who's engaged to a man. And the man is told. Ah she's pregnant. But. It's okay. The Lord has overshadowed her.
- [39 : 22] And she's carrying the son of God in her womb. And you're going to name him Jesus. And all of a sudden. Joseph is faced with this challenge. Because see. He could have put her away secretly in Nazareth. Because nobody goes to Nazareth.
- There's no Old Testament mentioning. Of the town of Nazareth. Nobody even knows about it. The only reason you know about it. Is because that's where Mary and Joseph are from. We don't even really know where it was at.
- And Joseph has to wake up and says. But notice what he does. Zacharias walks out of the temple. Unable to speak. God's word comes true. Mary hits her knees and says.
- Behold the bond slave. Or the bond servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word. And she surrenders her life. Joseph. The testimony is equally astounding. Though the wording is so much simpler. So Joseph arose.
- He got up and took Mary to be his wife. But he kept her a virgin. Until that child was born. And he named him Jesus. Sometimes when the word of God comes to you. You come see with a challenge. It seems impossible. To the circumstances around you.
- [40 : 30] And when the challenge of the word. Is there when the assurance. And the conviction is. That it is the word of God that has come. The greatest response. Is just to simply do what it is. That God's word has told you to do.
- No matter how impossible it seems. Because see the word is always challenging. I have yet to come upon a.
- Of life. In which the word of God does not challenge me. In some way. In some portion. In some manner. Because it says in the book of Hebrews. It's sharper than any two-edged sword.
- Cuts to the very joints. Division of the marrow. Right. It gets deep. It hurts. There's this great verse. And I know I've shared it with you before.
- It's a great verse. In the book of Leviticus. It says that God strikes to heal. Striking.
- [41 : 31] Yet healing. Healing. That God's judgment. Comes for the purpose of redemption and healing. And it is.
- This reality. That God often challenges us. And pushes us. And at times. Pushes us to a place of hurt. To heal us.
- I'm sure Zacharias and Elizabeth. Would have liked to have John. A long time before they did. Now that I'm on the grandparenting side of things. I rejoice that I did a majority of my parenting.
- Of young kids. A long time ago. Had a lot more energy then. I'm sure Zacharias and Elizabeth. Would have loved.
- To have been there. To see John's public ministry. Which they probably were not. I'm sure. Mary and Joseph. Would have liked to have. Looked a little bit more normal.

[42 : 29] But they did not. Because see what the word brought to them. Was a challenge. Not just a. For a moment. But it was a challenge. For the remainder of their life.

And that challenge. Ultimately shaped their life. And their calling. But. That challenge. That was placed upon them. Was for the healing. Of the nations.

And the redemption. Of mankind. He cut to the. Core of their being. For a moment.

But yet he. Healed them. When we get to. After the birth of Christ. And they present. And I'm wrapping up. They present him in the temple. Simeon and Anna are there. The prophet. The one is waiting.

And the prophetess. You remember what Simeon says. That sorrow. Would cut to the quick. Of Mary. That she would be. Heartbroken. But that that child.

[43 : 22] She was carrying. Would be a light of revelation. To the Gentiles. And to the world. The word came. With a challenge. A challenge. They would have to live out.

The remainder of their lives. But it brought healing. Friend. I don't know. Where the word. Challenges you today. But only through walking. In obedience. To the challenge. That the word of God.

Has given you. Will you ultimately find. The healing of being. In his presence. For his glory. And his alone. In spite of the difficulties. That it may bring upon you. Maybe. Possibly.

From this day forward. Let's pray. Father. We thank you for the day. We thank you for your word. We rejoice. In the way you work. During this season.

We stand astounded. In Emmanuel. Bluetooth. Bluetooth. with the fact that you would take on flesh and humanity to suffer and to die for our redemption.

[44 : 24] So may our lives be lived for your glory and honor and yours alone. And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen.