

12.01.24

Luke

Chapter 1 - An Inconceivable Announcement

Good News is for the Privileged (vs. 1-25)

Luke 1:1-4: Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

As we go into this wonderful gospel, and gospel is good news, right? “What is the good news?” You have to ask

yourself. Well, every one of the Gospels, the four Gospels convey the same good news, Jesus Christ came to die for you, for your sins, that you might have everlasting life, that your life would be abundant, that God would give you literally abundant life. How wonderful it is to know that God loves us and that He has a wonderful plan for our lives. Many people don't understand that this is actually true. We believe that there is a God. We actually believe that, and we believe that God is not defined by our imagination because as many as there are people in the world, they have imaginations of what they could conjure God to be. We believe God to be exactly who He says He is. God defines who He is. We don't, and we believe that the word of God is that which is His word. It is the word of God. Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he says, "I am so thankful that you received the word for what it really is, not the word of man, but the word of God."

If you take a moment and turn with me to 2 Peter 1, I feel like it's only appropriate that I emphasize this point.

(2 Peter 1:16) “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

“We saw this. We actually saw this.” Not only did they see the love of God that would die on the cross for them, but they saw the resurrected Christ that conquered death. Could you imagine being there? I mean, we're not talking about a fanciful tale. We're talking about something that literally happened.

It goes on and says this,

(2 Peter 1:17) “For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him...”

They actually heard the voice of God, which that doesn't happen every day. What a magnificent thing that is. We hear the words of God, and we sense the presence of God every day in everything that we see in creation, but to hear the voice of God, what a magnificent moment that must have been.

In which he cried out,

“... “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” —

(2 Peter 1:18) and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

Mount of Transfiguration; we oftentimes make reference to the passage.

(2 Peter 1:19) “So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

(2 Peter 1:20) But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation.”

You could, here again, interview people and ask, “What do you think God is?” It doesn't matter what they think. That doesn't define who God is.

(2 Peter 1:21) “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

(2 Timothy 3:16) All Scripture is "*theopneustos*" - All Scripture is inspired, breathed by God. We believe this is the word of God, and as the psalmist will say in Psalm 19, it is comprehensively flawless in every way. The magnificence of all of this is that we have these four Gospels written in a context of history, so that we know that these weren't just visions. There were actually people like Herod and Pilate and Caesar Augustus; before him, Mark Anthony. So, these real individuals existed, and we believe that the Gospels are nestled in a historical context. It is within this historical context that each of these gospels begin to reveal to us the good news of God in manifold ways and the wonderful thing about having the four gospels is, you see from different perspectives the same Gospel, but from different perspectives. It's almost as if each Gospel was written to a different audience. People had a specific need. So, as we go back to the Gospel of Luke, we're going to be looking at a specific emphasis of this gospel as we go through it, as if we were going through the Book of Matthew or Mark or John, we would be emphasizing a specific emphasis of those Gospels. In other words, the question that we would ask

ourselves at the very onset is, who was this Gospel written to? What was God wanting to convey and what is the good news to these people?

So, as you look at the Gospel of Matthew, for instance, you would have to come to the conclusion, as what is emphasized over and over again in the Gospel of Matthew, is the kingdom of God or the rule of God. That is to say, the good news is there's a different kind of ruler. One of the things that the people were very much concerned about was the way that the world was being run and the things that we see that are clearly tumultuous in our world. What would be good news to those who are oppressed by the rule of man? The good news would be, there's One coming who will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He will reign with righteousness. He'll make things right. I oftentimes think of politics and different ones come into office, and it's wonderful, perhaps, to have your guy get in there, but the bottom line is there's none righteous. No, not one. We understand that true peace on earth is not going to happen until Christ reigns,

the One who really cares for us in everything that He does. So, the Gospel of Matthew will emphasize that.

The Gospel of Mark will emphasize, and actually, I believe, be written to people that feel neglected because one of the great emphases of the Gospel of Mark is that Christ came to serve, and what's repeated over and over again in the very beginning of the Gospel of Mark is His desire to serve. So, the word immediately will be used over and over again, where Christ is coming to heal, where Christ is coming to help, and “He immediately,” and “He immediately,” and “He immediately.” To know that somebody is not only not neglecting us, but is rushing to our side is a wonderful, good news.

The Gospel of John is going to convey this good news to the unloved. One of the great verses within the Gospel of John will be, “For God so loved the world...” and we'll begin to see the love of God in a very personal way, throughout the Gospel of John.

One of the reasons why the Gospel of Luke is so near and dear to me though, is the way he introduces the gospel in a very unique way to very unique kinds of people that,

perhaps in many respects, have kind of given up on life; have kind of given up on the hopes that they have, the dreams, the aspirations that they have, and he writes specifically to the “unlikely.” As we go through the Gospel of Luke, we're going to see God's word, this gospel, this good news, to those that you'd have to say, “Well, that's unlikely.” But God will say, “That's the guy I'm coming to” and all the way through this Gospel, you're going to see this. And it's only appropriate that you have somebody write this book that is not likely to write it because most of Scripture was pinned by an author, the Holy Spirit, through individuals that were Jewish, but Luke is not. As we come into this Gospel, we are going to see that. Let me just say this, we probably wouldn't glean that right away from the Gospel of Luke because as you start off in the Gospel of Luke, it doesn't say that he's not a Jew, but if you look with me in Colossians, he is mentioned in Colossians. In the book of Colossians, it's going to actually make reference to the fact that he doesn't seem to fit into the category that many of the others do.

Paul writes to the Colossians in Colossians 4, and if you look with me, he says this,

(Colossians 4:10) “Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas’s cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);

(Colossians 4:11) and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision...”

More specifically, who are Jewish.

“... and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.”

So, actually, he lists the Jews.

Now he goes on, he says,

(Colossians 4:12) “Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

(Colossians 4:13) For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

(Colossians 4:14) Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas."

Now, what he's saying is that these are the Gentiles. In other words, the first group were the Jews, "These are the only ones," he says, "and then these are the Gentiles." So, he puts Luke in that category and probably the only passage that we would actually understand him to be a physician is mentioned within there. So, who is this, Luke? Well, you know, we could debate what, what nationality he was. Interestingly enough, in recent years they took some gleanings from his bones. Yeah, they actually have the bones of Luke. Originally, they had him buried in Thebes. There's a Thebes in Egypt and other places, but this was the Thebes in Greece, and they had his body laid there, but in 357, they actually took his body to Constantinople. From there, he ultimately ended up in Rome. They actually got to keep a rib in Thebes, which is very nice of Rome to allow them to do that. But in recent

days they actually took a DNA, and they found him to be Syrian. Very interesting. So, where he comes from, we believe that he comes from a more Gentile perspective and in many respects, if we were to ask around who is going to write this great gospel that we really celebrate the most; the Gospel of Luke is the one that has the Christmas story. No other Gospel has the Christmas story as we read it. So, who would be likely to write this? We would say Luke would be unlikely and all the way through this Gospel, we begin to see, and Luke will also write Book of Acts, as we will put the two together, and Luke will write most of the New Testament. If you take Luke and Acts, there will be more in those two books than all the rest of the New Testament. So, he writes most of the New Testament and you would almost have to say, well, that would be unlikely, that he would do that.

When we pick up with Luke and as we begin to see where he kind of chimes in, in the Book of Acts, we see him mentioned in what is called the “we” passages. So, up to about Chapter 16, you don't hear him being mentioned and then he ties himself with Paul's journey, and he uses

the phrase, “and we went here,” and “we went there,” and we began to see what is called the “we” passages in which Luke includes himself in the travels of Paul, whether or not he'd been traveling with them earlier, it's highly possible. However, he doesn't seem to include himself until that late date, and as he begins to include himself, we begin to see his involvement in that respect. I suppose that in many respects, Luke would perceive himself to be extremely fortunate that he would be numbered among and would perceive himself to be unlikely. It is for this reason, as you begin to read through the pages of Luke, that you begin to see the Spirit of God working through him and focusing on those who would be unlikely to be a part of this great and magnificent gospel of God visiting man. God among men. What an amazing thought that is, Emmanuel, God with man.

So, as we begin to read through the pages, we pick up things that we go, “That's only in the gospel of Luke. That's only in the Gospel of Luke.” For instance, at the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke, we're going to read about Zacharias and Elizabeth. It's only in the Gospel of

Luke, and that's really going to in a way, set the stage and we're going to talk about that today. But you would have to say, "Why would he go into detail about Zacharias and Elizabeth, the mother and father of John the Baptist?" Well, we're going to see why, but what you're going to see, as well as a person like Elizabeth, who is now very advanced in age, we don't know how old she is, but we know she's over 60 because Scripture says they're advanced in years and advanced in years would have to be over 60 according to Scripture. So, that means I'm advanced in age, but as you see this, you begin to realize, ok, she's advanced in age, but she's having a child. So, you're going, "Elizabeth, really? You're going to have John the Baptist?" And she goes, "That would be unlikely." Of course, Zacharias will probably say that more resounding and because of that, Gabriel will say, "Ok, you're not talking." So, we're going to see those unlikely things such as Anna, who has been waiting for this hope, and now she's 84 years old. Interestingly enough, they say that Luke died when he was 84. So, he records Anna being 84 when she's able to see the Christ child. A woman who had lost her husband at a very early age in her life and then

dedicated her life to serving the Lord, and because of that, God saw her. If you were to interview her and say, “Do you know that you'll be holding the Christ child?” She would probably say, “That would be very unlikely.”

Simeon, who had been longing for the coming of God and had been promised that he would see the Messiah before he dies, but at this stage of the game in his old age, it would be unlikely that he would see it. That God would reveal Himself; think about this, a multitude of heavenly hosts, who would they visit? Shepherds on night duty. We're not even dealing with the day duty shepherds. We're dealing with the night shift. If you were to ask the shepherds, “Do you think the heavenly host will come and visit you?” They'd say, “Very unlikely, because we're just shepherds.” But Luke will record this. It is not recorded in any other Gospel. You would not know it at all. You would not know the story about the good Samaritan had Luke not recorded it. Are Samaritans good? Very unlikely, but God will literally, in this one Gospel, change the name of the Samaritans, and you will always remember them as the “good Samaritan.” We even have ministries that are focused on the good Samaritan. It will only be in this

Gospel that you'll see the prodigal son. Can this man ever be loved again? Will he ever be loved deeply? Very unlikely, but he was, and it will only be the Gospel of Luke that will record a man going to paradise as a criminal on the cross. Of all the people of all the earth, how likely would it be that this criminal would be in paradise today with Jesus? Very unlikely. So, as we go through the Gospel, you're going to see pictures of this over and over and over again, and Luke will be emphasizing, "You're not going to believe this." And there is a reason for that, because really, as he begins to write this marvelous Gospel, it is a very difficult time.

63 or so years ago, from the time that this Gospel is actually picking up at, we understand that Rome had invaded Jerusalem. Because of their invasion, they have now controlled and taxed heavy these Jewish people, and they're under the thumb of the Roman government. They have governors that are over them, but they also have their own king, but the king is placed there by them. Mark Anthony had something to do with putting Herod in. Herod had some good connections with Mark Anthony

and for a while he thought he was pretty much in a really good position. Then Augustus comes in, or Octavius would be his name, but Augustus comes in and kind of pushes him out. Then, Herod has to do the double step tap dance and somehow get his backing behind him. So, he works really hard to do that. Herod is more concerned about the Roman government than he is about the people of Judea. He himself is not Jewish, even though he studied. He is from the tribe of Esau. So, he's an Edomite who is a brother of the Jews but not really on good terms. He tries to appease the Jews by building the temple, and he begins this work, and from what we understand, this work continues to go on up through about 80 years; one of the grand temples. Herod would not live to see the completion of the temple, but he will build this magnificent work, and it will be a place in which they can worship, even during the years of Christ. But to show his mindset, he will take a golden eagle and put it on the gate of the temple. The golden eagle was an emblem of the Roman government. So, to appease the Roman government, he would do this. He was hated very much by the Jews for doing that, and ultimately, they will crash

it down and then he will kill them for doing it. It's a very tumultuous time. Herod's more involved with a love for Herod than he is for anybody else.

In fact, if you look with me in the Gospel of Luke, it uses this very simple statement,

(Luke 1:5) “In the days of Herod, king of Judea...”

So, what it's doing is it's laying down this historicity. It's putting a setting in and letting us know these were tumultuous times and just to kind of let you know, when this Gospel picks up, as we're talking about Zacharias and Elizabeth, we're right around 4 BC; with this being right around 4 BC. Just to let you know, Herod dies at 4 BC. That's one of the reasons why we know that Jesus wasn't born in 0. Jesus was probably born right around the 4 BC time, right before Herod dies. See, so it is during this time that Herod has gone from bad to worse, and in his older age he has not become mellow. He has become more aggressive and more hostile to the point of he's already killed two sons. Towards the end of his life, on 4 BC, he will kill his third son because of his skepticism, his fears, his anxieties. He doesn't want anybody taking his place.

He will kill two of his wives and he will murder anybody that just has anything to do with going against him. When he comes close to the time of his death, he will literally gather together a large group of distinguished men, as he's dying, around the area of Jericho. He will sequester them in a group, and he will tell his men, "When I die, kill them all." And the reason why he wanted that is because he knew that people wouldn't in any way mourn his death. So, if he could kill all these distinguished men, that people would be crying when he died and that's what he longed to do. Now, Luke wants us to know these are the times that are going on. It's at this time that Zacharias is priest. So, it's not the best time to be a priest, though he has a special position.

Luke will begin this book by saying, "I've made as much effort as I can to make sure that this is accurate; everything is perfectly true." Now, we know the Spirit of God is literally controlling his hand, but the reason why he's stating this is that really up to this point, the Gospels had not been totally penned. We're not exactly sure, the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, somewhere

around this same time, which is around 62 BC is being written, but Luke understands that we want to make sure that you know everything accurately. And you have to understand as well that many of the people that had seen these things are still alive. So, he can't write something that's not true. So, he begins to pen this. He writes to a particular person, and this is what's very unique, because he'll also write to this person in Acts 1:1; his name will be Theophilus.

If you look with me in Luke, it reads this way,

(Luke 1:3) “it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus.”

Now, “most excellent” is a title of honor, so that the man that he's writing to is being recognized in some way as a person of great honor, and it would have to be conspicuous honor in the sense that he was a dignitary is to be noted. His name, Theophilus, means “friend of God.” So, here's the point, Scripture doesn't give us any details of who this guy is, and I believe for good reason

because it's talking about that there is this sense that there is an honor and a dignity, that perhaps is not recognized by a lot of people. What is unique is, as you begin to go through the Gospel of Luke, you're going to see people that are honored that you would say, "Ok. That would be unlikely." So, you can't come to the conclusion that he necessarily holds an office and the other part of this is, by virtue of his name, seems to be that his honor is specifically related to the fact that he is a friend of God; sort of like Abraham, as he's described, "was a friend of God." Now, here again, the ambiguity of who he is, I believe is emphasizing this. So, Luke begins to talk about somebody that perhaps is unlikely but has a position of honor solely because he is a friend of God. Shepherds, could you call them "friends of God"? Well, I would say if the angels visited you specifically, you are an honorable person because God doesn't just visit just anybody. But who God visits, who God reveals Himself to is much different than who we would perceive to be dignitaries in this world. It clearly is not talking about a Herod, which just as a side note, Herod names himself "Herod" because the name means "hero". So, you have,

once again, these individuals that perceived himself as grandiose, magnificent and yet are harsh and horrible and it is in this setting. Things are not going well in Jerusalem.

Therefore, we pick up,

(Luke 1:5) “In the days of Herod...”

Which is speaking a tremendous amount.

It tells us,

“...there was a priest named Zacharias...”

“To be remembered by Jehovah,” would basically be what his name means.

“...of the division of Abijah...”

Which means “God is my Father.”

“... and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.”

In other words, we see a connection with the priesthood. What's interesting to me is Zacharias, obviously, and Elizabeth are what we might even put in the category of privileged people. We might see them as such because he's one of the priests at this time; according to “the

division of Abijah,” which is telling us that David actually divided the priesthood in 24 divisions. So, I think Abijah was of the eighth division. So, at this particular point in time, it was time for him to do his specific duty. They would do their duty for about a week, so seven days from Sabbath to Sabbath they would have their duties. It was his turn. In a way, what Luke is saying is, “So, why would this be any different?” Is this day going to be different than any others? We would say, “highly unlikely,” but God would say, “No, no. Very likely.” Because God works at times that you would not think He would, and He works in people's lives that you would not think He would. In fact, what was probably going through the mind of both Zacharias and Elizabeth is, “If we're so special...” Let me just say this, I think we all, in certain areas of our life have certain privileges, but I think one of the problems is that if something is missing that you really love, you almost begin to feel that God's almost teasing you because, “He gave me all these things, but the very thing that I wanted the most, He didn't give me.” And what's clear in this setting with Elizabeth and Zacharias is they wanted a child. I mean, to not have a child was like the greatest of

curses, and she's of the priestly lineage in which, here she is, they're both elevated to the position, and they can't have a child, and now they're too old to have a child. So, is anything going to happen that's good for them? Well, it's highly unlikely that anything is going to happen. So, the passage is putting it in the context of which here they have the privileged position, but no benefits of it, and they're both going to die and leave no heritage. They will have no one following after them, even though, if you think about this, both parties are from one of the greatest genealogies.

In fact, it says,

(Luke 1:6) “They were both righteous in the sight of God...”

You have to step back and go, “Ok, they're doing everything they're supposed to do. They're in the perfect setting. They're going against the current with this Herod guy. Everything is difficult, but they've been doing the right thing.”

The passage reads this way,

“They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly...”

Which basically means they were ordering their life according to what was right in every area that they could.

“... in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

(Luke 1:7) But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren...”

Which means that she couldn't have a child all the way through and now, she's too old even if she could.

“... and they were both advanced in years.”

I mean, everything about this particular passage, and one of the reasons why Luke is introducing us once again, no other gospel will give us this information about this couple, is because the setting is not likely to happen. It is in this context that he goes in; it just happens to be his turn. It's an appointment of God.

(Luke 1:8) “Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,

(Luke 1:9) according to the custom...”

In other words, why was he there at this time? Because he was following the rules, and this couple had always followed the rules. They had always done what was right. How many times do you think they asked, “If we're doing what's right, why aren't we being blessed?” I mean, quite frankly, I could just see Elizabeth, “I never wanted all of this stuff. I want a kid.” No child. They continued to do the right thing.

“According to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot...”

As Proverbs says, God controls the casting of the lots.

“... to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.”

It's an interesting picture. The burning of the incense is actually the picture of prayers arising in the heavens. Thus, the smoke is a picture of that which rises up into heaven. So, it gives this this visual of prayers going up into heaven, prayers being offered; more specifically, prayers that are being offered that would be a fragrant aroma;

pleasing prayers to God. That's what we should be praying, right? Prayers that are pleasing to God.

Now, this example is actually given in Revelation 8, and you see the throne of God, and you see these prayers coming up before the throne of God and in the context it's the saints crying out basically that have been abused and misused by the world. They're crying out to God and God hears the prayers because they're putting their trust in Him. The picture seems to be that the people have gathered together, and they want Zacharias to offer up prayers for some sort of relief from this Roman government, from Herod, from the things that are going on. People are dying everywhere; no consideration for anybody.

(Luke 1:10) “And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer...”

It will let you know the connection between the offering of sacrifices.

“And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.”

It is at this time that the angel of the Lord comes. His name will be Gabriel, which means “strong one of God.” He will convey to Zacharias, “I stand in the presence of God.” Something that doesn't happen every day. What's the odds of Gabriel visiting you today? Highly unlikely. Right, and that he would visit the eighth order? It's a wonderful picture of the resurrection, the number “8.”

That Zacharias was not expecting this, is seen in verse 12. His reaction is troubled. He's disquieted, distressed by this being coming before him.

(Luke 1:13) “But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard...”

So, he's actually coming to grant a petition.

Luke will record in Acts 12 a very similar incident in which, if you remember, Peter had been arrested, been thrown in prison, and then the angel came and actually freed him. The church had been praying for him in Mary's house, the mother of Mark. So, as they were praying, Peter starts knocking on the door. You know, a little maid comes out, “Who is it?” “Peter.” She doesn't open the door for him. She runs back and says, “Peter's at the door.” And then

they all say, and I quote, “You're losing your mind.” So, it is interesting that we oftentimes pray and expect nothing. James says you're a double-minded man, unstable in all your ways. Don't expect that you receive anything, but God is still sometimes very gracious to us in spite of ourselves.

(Luke 1:13) “But 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.”

Which means this is “a gift from God.” Truly, it is a gift from God, a magnificent gift.

(Luke 1:14) “You will have joy and gladness...”

Which is telling us that they don't have joy and gladness right now. See, “But this will bring joy and gladness to you, that this time next year you would be celebrating.” They would probably say, “Highly unlikely that I'm going to be happy.”

“You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

(Luke 1:15) “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.”

(Luke 1:16) “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.”

(Luke 1:17) “It is he who will go as a forerunner...”

It’s actually prophesied according to Malachi 4:6.

“... he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous...”

I mean, they're looking at all these things that are happening in their society, and how could you ever bring fathers and sons and relationships healing in a massive way and in a mass way, all of these people and their hearts? And he says, “It's going to happen, and your son is going to be a part of it.” Could you imagine? At this juncture, he’s thinking, “Son? Are you sure? My son?” Because as it goes on, Zacharias is having a real hard time believing this.

(Luke 1:18) “Zacharias said to the angel, “How will I know this for certain? ...”

Actually, if I could transliterate more specifically, he literally is asking, “How could I ever experience this?” And he gives us this reason,

“...For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.”

“It can't happen.” Yeah, well, Sarah laughed and so did Abraham.

(Luke 1:19) “The angel answered and said to him...”

I like the way that Gabriel answers because we think of angels, “Oh, a visit from an angel, how wonderful.” I don't think so. You want a visit from Jesus, far more compassionate.

The angel says, “Look, do you have any idea who I am? I'm the mighty warrior. I'm the prevailer. I'm the confirmer of God's word. You don't mess with me. I stand in the presence of God.”

The way he way he describes himself,

(Luke 1:19) “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...””

You know how you sometimes feel like just wringing people's neck, “God has good news for you!” I'm sure he probably felt that way at this particular moment. “I'm bringing you good news, you idiot, and you're not listening to me.”

(Luke 1:20) “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...””

What's his crime? He did not believe. He didn't believe God could be good, but more than this, and here again, I want you to put it in the context of Luke, he did not believe that God could work in the unlikeliest. The same thing that we do day after day. We're afraid sometimes to even bring certain prayers before God. At least these people were bringing prayers, but we're afraid because it's highly unlikely that God would do something. I mean, perhaps because of the circumstances that surrounded us, perhaps because of the age that we are, that God

could use us at this stage? Highly unlikely, but God will use Zacharias and Elizabeth at a later age. I tell people I'm a late bloomer, that God would use me at a late age, that's great. That he would use Anna and that he would use Simeon at a late age in such a way that would be so magnificent. I mean, talking to somebody at the end of their life and saying, "These years are the greatest years of your life" and you go, "Highly unlikely." And God goes, "That's the Gospel of Luke! That's the wonderful message."

So, he goes on and says in the passage,

"... 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."

(Luke 1:21) The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple."

They're wondering, "What's the delay. I mean, we want to hear, how did the prayers go?" And he's not coming out, so that's probably bad news, right? That's what I would think.

(Luke 1:22) “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.

(Luke 1:23) When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.”

Seven days had been completed. He had completed the service.

(Luke 1:24) “After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying,

(Luke 1:25) “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me...”

Watch the end of verse 25. It literally describes how she had been feeling all her life.

“...to take away my disgrace among men.””

Will you ever have the blessing of God upon you? Highly unlikely, and Luke is going to say over and over again, “Don't say that anymore.” There are things in your life that you're struggling with. God is the God of the

unlikely. He's going to work in ways that you could never imagine. God is able to do beyond what we could ask or think. Sometimes you're going to feel like you're laid on the shelf. Sometimes you're going to feel like God is just plain late. Sometimes you feel like He's not going to do anything at all. You want to know what's unlikely? It's unlikely that He's not going to do anything at all because God is a God who hears your prayers, and He hears the prayers of those that we would pass off as saying they're either past their prime, past their time; they're past what God could use in any way. I mean, for crying out loud, if you can use a man on the cross who is a criminal in his final breathes of life, and use him to minister to thousands, no, millions of people throughout the centuries, because that story has spoken to millions of people. In just a few seconds, that life has ministered to an abundant amount of people. How unlikely would that be, that God could take your life, and He could use you greatly?

We're going to be seeing in the Book of Luke people that have been subverted, pushed behind. Samaritans that

nothing good can come from a Samaritan; kind of like a Nazareth thing. Nothing good can come from a Samaritan because Samaritans are just bad people, and God says, "I'm going to pull this guy out and I'm going to show you that's not true, and I'm going to make him good. I'm going to make his name good." God is gracious, isn't He? God has great things for you. When you go in to pray today, don't say "unlikely," say, "God is able to do abundant and beyond what we could ask or think," and celebrate the fact that you're the most unlikely person that it could ever happen to because that's the people that He works in.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your abundant love for us, and Your presence with us, no matter what; that You see our heart, though man looks at the outward appearance. There are people in great offices, there are people that have great positions, but You're not necessarily with them. That You would reveal Yourself to shepherds instead of kings first is a magnificent story. You're telling us that You look at the heart, and how wonderful it will be

as we read through the pages of Luke, as the disciples are looking at the greatness of the temple, to see You looking at the widow giving her mite. That man looks at things that are grand and great; You look at the heart that is humble. Lord, we give You thanks for good news, because You give good news to the unlikely.

With your head's bowed and your eyes closed. I'm just going to ask you to trust Him to do a work in your life. I think a lot of times we just pass off that God could ever do something great in our life. It's just not true, brothers and sisters. God wants to do great things in your life, and He sees your heart.