

Luke

The Gospel for Everyone

Study 11 | Luke 1:1-25

News and Needs

Upcoming Events:

- Happy Thanksgiving! Don't be a glutton.
- Advent wreath-making will take place after the morning service on November 29th.

Opportunities to Serve:

- John Jay High School Research School Teacher Appreciation - Sponsor a \$10 gift card to say thanks to one of the 50 teachers at School of Research. Be on the lookout for a table set up at church starting Nov. 8th

“Zechariah’s Longing”

1. Advent is a season in which we prepare for the second coming of Jesus by anticipating the celebration of his first coming. What future hopes do you find yourself waiting for day after day, year after year? What struggles do you have with waiting for good things to come in the future?

Advent (“coming”) is the season in which we prepare for Christmas. More specifically, it is the season in the church year in which we prepare for Jesus to come. This preparation, this praying for Jesus to come, is done with an eye to the past, present, and future. *The Past*- Obviously, Christmas is a season in which we celebrate and commemorate the first coming of Jesus into our Earth as an infant. So in Advent we prepare to remember and celebrate Jesus’ coming to us in the past. *The Present*- Less obviously, Advent is a time in which the people of God remember God’s faithfulness to come in the past in order to prepare for him to come to us now in the present! Advent is not chiefly a time in which we prepare to remember Christmas past; it is just as importantly a time in which we beg and trust God to bring salvation to us now, to continually come to us and take up residence in our hearts, homes, churches, and world. *The Future*- Lastly, Advent is a season in which we prepare for Jesus to come to this world in the fullness of his everlasting kingdom. It is a time in which we beg him to return and make things right at the end of time; in which we prepare for his second coming.

The mood of Advent is that of longing, of expectation, and of waiting. Advent is a time when we yearn for Jesus to come back, to completely make all things new as the returning King. The cry of Advent is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet, have hope of deliverance from a God who hears the cries of the oppressed and who brings them deliverance.

Of course, as the Old Testament prophets remind us, there is the problem of longing for vindication from an evil world when we are contributors to that evil. And so, as a season of preparation, Advent is a time to repent and believe. A time to turn away from the false hopes and desires that capture our hearts and define our lives, twisting us so much that we end up using and oppressing others. A time to turn toward Jesus, who frees us from slavery to our idols in order that we may serve one another in hope and love as we await his return.

2. What do you learn in verses 1-4 about Luke's purpose in writing his gospel? How does Luke describe the process of writing his work? Does knowing how he compiled his gospel help you to have certainty in his account, and thus in Christ's promise to come to us? Why or why not?

The gospel of Luke is the longest book in the New Testament and was written by Luke, who was a very well educated Gentile Christian. Luke is also responsible for the book of Acts (which is the second half of his gospel, together forming one major work). He was not himself an eyewitness to Jesus, but was a companion of Paul and other early Christian leaders, and he used his historical training to compile an orderly account from many early eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and ministry. Luke was composed most directly for other Gentile Christians in the nascent Christian church. In 1:3 Luke addresses his book to the "most excellent Theophilus," who is either a real patron or a literary address to all "*God-Lovers*". This gospel was written and circulated no later than the 60's A.D.

Here Luke says that he has written this gospel so that Theophilus (the reader) "might have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." In other words, the gospel of Luke's chief aim is to confirm an already existing faith in his readers. They have been taught about Jesus, and now he wants them to have even more certainty about what they believe. He has gone to painstaking research and levels of detail from eyewitnesses themselves in order to provide this certainty to his readers.

3. How do Zechariah and Elizabeth react to the preparations for the Messiah's coming? Where do they fail, succeed? What can we learn from their examples about how to better observe this Advent season?

Zechariah was a man who was praying fervently for a child of his own. As he is called "righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and and statutes of the Lord," we can assume that he was a godly and faithful man who was rigorous in all the details of his faith--even as he would prepare earnestly for the coming Messiah. But despite this very real pedigree, if you will, we learn in verse 18ff that even he was not prepared to receive what the staggering good news of the Messiah would mean for his own life. He "does not believe" (20) what the angel tells him and so he is struck dumb. But he seems to accept his discipline, learn from it, and go on to serve faithfully as he awaits the promise to come true. Elizabeth has only a brief appearance in this passage, but she seems to go private with the turn of events, and also to interpret herself in the great tradition of barren women in the Bible who miraculously conceive by God's grace. She remembers his faithfulness. What are ways we disbelieve God's promises? Or see in them his sure faithfulness?