

## **CPC Advent 2020**

### **A Journey with Jesus through Luke**

**Week 1:** November 29- December 5th

**Reading:** Luke Chapters 1-8



### **Yahweh is gracious, Yahweh saves by faith!**

The Gospel of Luke is the third canonical Gospel, which tells of the origins, birth, ministry, atonement, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Sixty percent of Luke's Gospel is unique, meaning the accounts of the birth of John the Baptist, Jesus's childhood and pre-ministry, a travelog about Jesus's journey to Jerusalem, material on the post-resurrection appearances, the Emmaus road, and Jesus's ascension into Heaven is only found in Luke. One writer puts it like this: "These events constitute not just history but salvation history, the entrance of God's salvation into human history through Jesus and his messianic community."<sup>1</sup>

In your reading of Luke chapter 1-8 this week, you will learn about Gabriel's proclamation and the actual births of John the Baptist and Jesus. You will also read about Jesus's childhood years, his baptism, how he was tempted, the beginnings of his adult ministry and the naming of the twelve apostles. There are so many things we could talk about in these chapters but we are going to focus primarily on how Zachariah and Mary each responded to God's promises.

### **Zachariah**

Starting with John's Story: Zechariah was one of eighteen thousand estimated priests during this time who were divided into twenty-four divisions. Each priestly division was responsible for assigning the priests for two weeks a year. Those who served were chosen by lottery. During Zachariah's two weeks while serving, he was visited by the angel Gabriel while in the most sacred part of the temple. Even Gabriel's position, standing to the right of the altar, represented God's favor. Gabriel proclaimed the good news to Zachariah about the birth of a son that will be named "John", which translates to "Yahweh is gracious." However, because Zachariah questioned God's promise, he was rendered speechless for a time.

### **Mary**

Now let's look at how Jesus's story unfolds. Mary is also visited by the angel Gabriel. She is a virgin, estimated to be about 14 years old. She is not a person with any stature or high position in society. She lives in the town of Nazareth, which is not known for anything significant and she is engaged to Joseph, a descendant of David. She is told by Gabriel that she will conceive a son and have Him named Jesus, which translates to "Yahweh saves." She is also told He will be

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<sup>1</sup> "Luke Verse by Verse" by Grant R. Osburn

great and the son of the Most High. It's hard to wrap our heads around a proclamation of such significance for all humanity. Yet, Mary did not doubt God's promise to her.

## **Response!**

Let's compare each of their responses. Mary's response was, "How can this be..?" Her question was innocent and reflects natural doubts, not lack of faith. She is wondering how she can possibly conceive as a virgin. She understands how conception works so she wasn't questioning "if" God could make this happen, it was a question of "how" will God make this happen. We know this because of Gabriel's response as he explains the supernatural nature of "how" she will conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a good example of what Jesus meant in Matthew 18:2 "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Mary's faith had a very child-like innocence to it.

However, Zachariah's response was one of disbelief and showed a lack of faith. He questioned the plausibility of conception because of his age. In other words, he doubted God's ability to fulfill the promise. He wasn't asking Gabriel "how" it was going to happen, meaning what physiological changes either of them were going to endure in order to conceive. It was a question of "if" it could happen at all.

## **Conclusion**

Rather than doubting God's promises, we should be expectant that God will fulfill His promises even when we aren't privy to all the details of how. So instead of asking ourselves "if" God's will is being exercised in our lives, we should be more faithful like Mary and only ask "how" God's will can be executed in our lives each and every day.

Consider this... when we ask our children to complete a chore or task at an early age, they might ask a few questions but they are much more likely to start working to complete the task because they trust us. We know as their parents, they are going to do everything they can to complete it, independent of the outcome. So they aren't questioning "if" or "why" they should do it, they just want to please us. At least at first. As time goes by and the teenage years come things often become more... complicated. Which relationship is most like our relationship with our Father above?