

## Home study notes 8/12/24

### Zechariah and Elizabeth

- *Have you ever been temporarily mute?*
- *How long can you sit in silence - alone or with someone?*
- *When do you enjoy silence and when is it difficult?*
- *Is there good silence and not-so-good silence?*

This account of Zechariah and Elizabeth is the first account of God interacting with His people after the Old Testament prophet of Malachi written 400 years before. In this short book God promises: ***"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me."*** (3:1) and in the second last verse (4:5): ***"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you ..."***. And then there was 4 centuries of SILENCE.

There is no record of a prophet, no revelations, no fresh word from God to His people, generations without an interaction with God .... Silence - the promise was not being fulfilled ... and then the angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah, a priest on duty in the temple.

- *how do you feel when God is silent when you want a word from Him?*

#### Read Luke 1: 11-20

Zechariah is stunned by an angel who tells him that his prayers have been answered. Firstly for him and his wife - they will have a child, but also for the nation of Israel as God plans to use this child. ***"He will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*** (vs 17). These are the same words that Malachi wrote and clearly now was the time for the promise in them to be fulfilled.

- *Do you think that Zechariah's response was understandable?*
- *How might you respond if an angel appeared to you to tell you that your prayers had been answered?*

The Angel responds by revealing who he is - the Archangel Gabriel - and telling Zechariah that: ***"I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news."***(vs19) As a priest Zechariah was regularly in God's temple and was at that time standing by the altar, but this angel declared that he actually stood in God's presence and was sent by Him!

- *What feelings do you have about being in God's presence?*
- *What do you think of the consequence experienced for Zechariah's unbelief?*
- *How does God use silence to work in our lives?*

**But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.  
Galatians 4:4-5**

## Read Luke 1: 57 - 66

After the birth, while Zechariah is still mute, they ask Elizabeth to name the child but they do not approve of her choice and so ask Zechariah. He writes down the name that Gabriel instructed him to give his son - John. The moment that Zechariah is obedient, his tongue is loosened and he immediately starts to praise God in the song written in verse 68 - 79.

In those 9 months of silence, Zechariah has come to see and understand God's plan and has been drawn closer to Him. He says to baby John: **"And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins ..."** (vs76-77)  
So God is glorified and the message starts to spread.

God's silence does not mean that He is absent, or not working ... He is always at work, even in the silence. God's timing is perfect. As Zechariah spent time in silence, so he drew near to God.

In our times of hardship, pain and difficulty God may appear to be silent but He is always working. Be honest with Him and let Him meet you in your pain. At Christmas we celebrate Immanuel - "God with us" - and we are reminded again that He is always with us, even in the silence, the sorrow and the pain.

**As you believe in the sun even when it is not shining, continue to believe in God's love even in times of darkness when you don't feel his love.**

Nicky Gumble

- *When has God used silence in your life to draw you closer to Him?*
- *Are you waiting for God to answer a prayer that He is currently silent about?*
- *Pray for each other, that in the times when God is mute, we may know His presence and love ... and be patient for HIS timing.*
- *Christmas can be a difficult time for some people - is there anything you can do individually or as a group to help someone?*

**Way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper  
Light in the darkness  
My God, that is who You are...  
Even when I don't feel it, You're working  
You never stop, You never stop working**  
(Leeland 2019)

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29lxnsqOkmQ>**