

Luke 1:5-17 (NIV)

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.

6 Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.

7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,

9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.

14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,

15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.

17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

42-01-07-Zechariah - Serving While Waiting
Advent, Messiah, Preparation, Service, Anticipation
Luke 1:5-17

The Lord's Advent should find us waiting for Him by serving Him.

INTRODUCTION: (Luke 1:5-17 as Scripture Reading)

–*Advent* [*“coming”*] is *pivotal* in the Christian Calendar. It both ends and restarts the Christian year. *Advent* begins with songs about OT longings like “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,*” then moves into Christ's Nativity (His 1st Coming) which *fulfilled those longings*. These themes run from the Sunday after Thanksgiving until Christmas Eve, then spill over into the *12 Days of Christmas*, the short season called *Christmastide*.

–At *Advent*, we join ancient Jewish believers in pondering the promised *birth of Christ* [*anointed; messiah*] whose *coming* was to bring a new era of deliverance and peace. With them, we **wait & watch**, or **wait-watch**.

–Today, few **weight-watch** between Thanksgiving & Year's. But Luke begins the story of Christ's Nativity with an old **WAIT-watcher** named Zechariah—*husband* of Elizabeth and *father* of John the Baptist. His *example* should help us see that **HOM.idea**.

I. Zechariah, as well as his wife Elizabeth, were *watchful believers*

– v.6, *Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.*

A. They were “*upright in the sight of God*” (We're **watchful** in watching what we do, knowing that God's eyes on us are watchful too.)

1. [“O Be Careful little eyes, what you see... little ears what you hear... little tongue what you say... little hands what you do... little feet where you go... For the Father up above / Is **looking down in love**. So, be careful little one....] (We need this song *today*... because God never stops watching)

2. Watching the world's focus bends us downward towards worldly ways; a God-focused watchfulness keeps our life “*upright*.”

B. These two were “*observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly*.” (Waiting faithfully starts by “*observing*” what God has already given us to watch over (the “*commandments*” in His Word).

C. In the past, this couple prayed in hope, *waiting* and *watching* for a pregnancy— v.7, *But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.* (In that day, *barrenness* was a “*disgrace*” and a *grief* for losing the ability to pass on a heritage.)

TRANS: *Barrenness* also cancelled any chance of being parents of the prophesied *Messiah*. Many faithful *waiters* and *watchers* had that hope. They knew the Messiah would be Abraham's descendant. Despite their *childlessness*, this *old couple* kept faithfully *watching* and *waiting*....

II. Zechariah's *wait-watching* involved his priestly ministry— v.8-9,

Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

- A. He “was on duty... serving as priest.” His *sporadic* ministry points to ours, which is *as continuous as Christ's* was after His baptism.
1. Zechariah's blood-tie to Aaron made him a “priest.” (Our blood-tie to Jesus made us into a “royal priesthood” with *priestly duties*.)
 2. He was “on duty” by schedule. (*If we follow Jesus, we're always “on duty” or on call, always at God's disposal, ready to serve.*)
- B. His *service* was “to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.”
1. We're always in God's “temple,” as long as we're in these bodies.
 2. Our main service in this bodily “temple” is to “burn incense”— v.10, *And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside*. [Biblically, incense symbolized prayer].

TRANS: Paul tells us, “pray without ceasing,” because we're *always* a “priest,” *always “on duty,”* *always* to be waiting and watching for Christ's 2nd Advent. (Jesus said in Mark 13:33 (NKJV), “Take heed, **watch** and **pray**; for you do not know when the time is.” **His Advent should find us waiting for Him by serving Him**, and to “wait on the Lord” *in prayer* is a big part of that service, and it has benefits— Psa 27:14 (NKJV), **Wait** on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; **Wait**, I say, on the LORD! And Zechariah's prayerful waiting proved to have *great benefits*...

III. Zechariah had a *fulfilling surprise*— v.13-15a, *But the angel said to him:*

“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.”

- A. What a *surprising “joy and delight”!* Not only is “*your prayer... heard,*” but “*many will rejoice because of his birth,*” because John's *prophetic ministry* would get them ready for a Messiah Who is “*God with us.*”
- B. God used John's *prophetic preaching* to prepare His people for

His coming, His advent— v.16-17, *Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (God still uses the message of Christ's Advent:*

1. to renew our spiritual loyalties: “bring [us] back to the Lord”
 2. to renew us as godly parents: “turn... [father's] hearts to their children”
 3. to renew our obedience (in word, thought and deed): to “turnthe disobedient [in word, thought and deed] to the wisdom of the righteous”
- C. Zechariah's joy in his boy became God's plan in a man to fulfill Isa 40:3, A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. (*Did Zechariah get it... the big picture? Yes, he got it!* (after Mary's story and her trip to Elizabeth and John's birth, he said in v.76-79, “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, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”)

CONCLUSION:

—**The Lord's Advent should find us waiting for Him by serving Him.** It found Zechariah still *wait-watching* in priestly service. In his old age, he got to see the miraculous birth of a son who would prepare God's people for God's Son. As Zechariah, let's be *waiting & watching in faithful service*, while we anticipate Christ's Advent... His Coming.