

ADVENT (Practical Waiting Can Prompt Spiritual Waiting)

Andy Deane · 12/03/2023 · Luke 1:1-25

Ad· vent (noun) — “Arrival” [Latin]

1. The period beginning four Sundays before Christmas.
2. Remembering the first arrival of Christ at the incarnation.
3. Anticipating the second arrival of Christ in the future.

Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

Luke 1:1-4, *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

- Written to? *Theophilus* (name means “loved by God”) & preserved for the church.
- Why written? that you may know the *certainty* (1) about Jesus.

Doesn't mean: you'll get what you pray for.

Luke 1:5-7, *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 righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.*

- They served God: *Zechariah...belonged to the priestly division* (5)
- They obeyed God: *were righteous in the sight of God* (6)
- They were prayerful: *your prayer has been heard.* (13)
- So what does a faithful life like that add up to? *they were childless* (7) 🤔
- After years of waiting they finally gave up hope: *both very old* (7)
- That's confusing to us. They were blameless, but barren! Why?
 - Society would think: it was some hidden sin, but wasn't true!
 - Christ-followers can think: God is still good, wise, kingdom minded, & playing long-game (eternal rewards).

Means: you'll have peace & purpose as you wait.

Luke 1:8-17, *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 call him 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 before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel 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 parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

- They gave up their dream of having a child, but they did not give up on serving God: *he was serving as priest* (8)
- Eugene Peterson's definition of discipleship is that it's a “long obedience in the same direction”.
- So how was God still being good despite this difficulty? We see five reasons:
 - God still was with them: *before God* (8)
 - God still guided them: *he was chosen by lot* (8)
 - God still spoke to them: *angel of the Lord appeared* (11)
 - God still heard them: *your prayer has been heard* (13)
 - God still had plans: *Elizabeth will bear you a son* (14)

- John's life mission is a great advent mission for us to have during this season:
 - Restoration: *bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord* (16)
 - Reconciliation: *turn the hearts of the parents to their children* (17)
 - Holiness: *turn...disobedient to wisdom of the righteous* (17)
 - Expectancy: *make ready a people prepared for the Lord* (17)
- John was prophesied about beforehand so that you may know the certainty of our faith:
 - Isaiah 40:3-4, *A voice of one calling in the wilderness: "Prepare the way for the Lord"*.
 - Malachi 3:1, *I will send my messenger, who will prepare..*
 - Malachi 4:5, *I will send the prophet Elijah to you before...*

Doesn't mean: you are waiting perfectly.

Luke 1:18-23, *18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." 19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time." 21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. 22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. 23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home.*

- Zechariah said ...*"How can I be sure of this? I am an old man & my wife is well along in years."* (18)
- He's a priest. He knows the OT impossible stories, but when God tells Him it's His turn, he says, "impossible"!
- That's us isn't it? Doubt is reasonable based on our life experience, but not based on the God we read about.
- Zachariah's unbelief didn't cause God to move on from Him. That's encouraging!
- We're not always blessed because of the great size of our faith, but because of the greatness of our God.
- Moments of doubt & our moments of impatience, don't disqualify us, if we have an underlying foundation of faith.

Means: giving God glory no matter how He answers.

Luke 1:24-25, *24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."*

- God will do what He do what He knows is best for us & His kingdom: *Elizabeth became pregnant* (24)
- We may still have our fears: *for five months remained in seclusion* (24b)
- We give Him glory: *The Lord has done this for me* (25a)
- For whatever blessing He chooses to give us: *He has shown his favor* (25b)
- Trusting that one day His plan will be revealed: *taken away my disgrace among the people* (25c)

This advent season: wait on God & watch Him arrive!

- God takes the barren of the world (people who have no hope for fruitfulness) & makes them fruitful for His glory.
- Luke 18:27, *What is impossible with man is possible with God.*
- Where have you lost hope this holiday season? How can you let practical waiting prompt spiritual waiting?
- Maybe delays, lines, traffic, being late are prompts to: pray, be silent, talk to someone nearby or make a call.
- Isaiah 40:31, *they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*