

## The Foundation of Our Hope

2025-11-30 – Luke 1:5-25



This Sunday, we are beginning a new series in the Gospel of Luke focused on the stories leading up to the birth of Christ. Join us as we prepare our hearts to celebrate Christmas by looking at how the Lord fulfills His promises and does far more than we could ever ask or imagine.

Good morning. We're talking about hope today. So, it's a good day to mention the Bears. So, I got on a plane on Friday and the Bears were winning slightly and I got off the plane and they had won. And that's, that's hope fulfilled.

Today we're going to be talking about hope. If you've got your Bibles, I want to invite you to open to **Luke chapter 1**. We're going to be in verses 5 through 25. And today we're going to be looking at two people, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Two people who put their hope in God, even when their prayers went unanswered for many years.

I admire Zechariah and Elizabeth because their hope was a hope in truth to a God that whether he answered their prayers, they would follow him because they trusted in him.

Today, as we dig into this passage, we are beginning a series, The Good News of Great Joy, where we're going to be in the Gospel of Luke. We're going to be here for the next five sermons as we approach Christmas Day and celebrate the incarnation of our King, our Lord, and our Messiah. And then we're going to be in Luke through Easter and after that we're going to do some Acts. So we're going to be with the author Luke for a very long time and I'm very excited for that because this gospel is so wonderful. It's full of the teachings of Jesus and it's full of his Parables. and his teachings and his actions. We are going to see those play out but the passage or the story of the Gospel of Luke doesn't begin with the announcement of the birth of Jesus; but, the announcement of the birth of John. And so today we are going to look at the hope that two people had and how they faithfully followed the Lord and how he brought about their hope. He fulfilled it and fulfilled far more than they could have asked or imagined.

It's such an amazing passage to read because in Zechariah and Elizabeth, we see people whose hope is deeply embedded in God, whether he answers their prayers or not.

I don't know about you, but sometimes my relationship with God is very transactional. Sometimes I pray, "God, if you do this for me, I'll do this for you." Some of you, good. Some of you know about these types of prayers. I talked to people who said that one day I was so worried and I prayed, "God, if you help me pass this test, then I will read my Bible more often," but maybe I should have been reading the book.... But there's so many examples of this, little

and big. The famous trope in movies is that when people are on planes and the plane is starting to have turbulence, they cry out to God for the first time and they think, “God, have you saved me? I’ll live for you.” And then they’re saved and maybe they do or don’t.

But when we talk about hope, the hope we are talking about today is not a cheap hope. It’s not a hope in a sports team, as wonderful and delightful as it might be when you land at O’Hare. It’s not a hope in things that are within our control. As we talk about hope today, we are talking about a hope that is worth living your life for. The hope we are talking about in the Gospel of Luke is a hope that would lead someone to change how they live, trusting that the Lord is worth following, and that is what we are going to see as we look at the foundation of our hope in the Gospel of Luke chapter 1 verses 5 through 25.

### **The Foundation of Our Hope**

If you’re here today and you’re a believer, I pray that these words would be a deep encouragement for you. And a reminder that even when the Lord is not answering the prayers you have, or even when he’s answering them no, because we don’t like believing this, but God can say “No”, and that is an answer to prayer. But however God answers your prayer, your hope should be in him.

And if you’re here today and you are not a believer, my encouragement for you is that this message would lead you to cry out to him, to cry out to the one who is worthy of our hope because he is perfect, he is sovereign, and he works all things out for the good of those who follow him.

To that end, let me pray.

*Father in heaven, we thank you for your word. We thank you this morning that as we come before you, we can trust in your promises because your promises that began before the foundation of the world, you have shown yourself to be faithful to them, and you always will. We thank you, Lord, that you are perfect and sovereign and that you are worthy of all hope and faith. And we pray right now, Lord, that we would put our faith and hope and trust in you. I pray right now, Lord, that your spirit would be moving in our midst, that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear what your word has to say. And Father, I pray you would speak to me and speak through me, that these would be your words and not mine. We pray all of this in the holy and precious name of your son, Jesus.  
Amen. Amen.*

So the goal today is we are looking at **The Foundation of Our Hope**, and we’re going to find that in **Luke chapter 1**, beginning in verse 5.

### **The Foundation of Our Hope**

The righteousness of our works will never be enough

The first thing we're going to see today as we talk about the foundation of our hope is that **the righteousness of our works will never be enough**. And you may say, well, that's not a very positive way to start talking about hope. But this is good news. **The righteousness of our works will never be enough**, because if the righteousness of our works could be enough, then for many of us, we would never measure up. In fact, none of us ever measure up. And yet we still have hope in Christ.

**The righteousness of our works will never be enough**. And we see that as we open to **Luke 1:5-7**:

“In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah’s division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both were righteous in God’s sight, living without blame, according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.”

Luke 1:5-7 CSB

**“In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah’s division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both were righteous in God’s sight, living without blame, according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.” (Luke 1:5-7)**

And we need to pause here because we've just read something that for the people of that day would have read as a direct contradiction. If you were an ancient Israelite and around zero BC, this is a little bit before Jesus. This is the story of John's birth announcement. If you were under the covenant of the Old Testament and the law of the Old Testament, the expectation would be that if someone was righteous, and without blame in God's sight, according to the laws and commands of the Lord, then they would have no trouble bearing children. That was the expectation that the people had. And it wasn't a promise, but it was a principle.

We see this play out in other places in the New Testament. If you remember in John, there's the disciples and Jesus are walking and they see a blind beggar and the disciples say, “Who sinned? This man or his parents.” The people of the day thought that if someone couldn't have children or if someone was born with illness it was because of sin and a specific sin within the family. Now that is not what is happening here because **both were righteous in God's sight and living without blame according to the law** but the people of that day would have assumed that there was something wrong here. They would have looked at Elizabeth and Zechariah and wondered. In fact, later in the passage, Elizabeth praises the Lord and says he's taken away her disgrace among the people.

Now, if you're out there and you have struggled to have children and you read this passage and think, is it because I'm so sinful? This is covenant Old Testament Israel picture here. This passage is not, not about whether or not your sin leads having children. This passage is specific to the Old Testament law as we are talking about it.

And as I say these things, in this case, they were righteous and they were living without blame according to the commands and requirements of the Lord. What's interesting when you read this is you might say, well, does that mean they're perfect? And of course, the answer to that is no, but they are following the law well. Righteous in God's sight, this would be like David. He was a man after God's own heart. Yes, he fell, and there were problems, but there were seasons where he looked very righteous. And there are different people in the Old Testament, you see, living blameless for periods of time, but this, again, does not mean they are without sin, but it means that they were doing well.

For Zechariah and Elizabeth, whenever I read these three verses, I marvel, because we find out as we keep reading that their prayer was that the Lord would bless them with children, and the answer to that prayer repeatedly was no. And yet that did not change, that they were righteous in God's sight, living without blame. They are commendable in this passage because as we read, we see people that were doing their best to follow the Lord according to the law, even as the Lord did not give them what they had hoped for. That is good. That is very good.

If you take nothing else from this sermon, from a human perspective, live like Elizabeth and Zechariah. Don't let your hope be dependent on God answering your prayers, because then your hope is in a transaction. Let it be on the God who is worthy of following, who is righteous and perfect and holy, whether or not he does things the way that we see.

When his division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, it happened that he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense.

Luke 1:8-9 CSB

***When his division was on duty, and Zechariah was serving as priest before God, it happened that he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense.***

Now, when we read this, we don't understand the gravity of this moment.

There were about 18,000 priests in this day, and they would serve in different shifts according to their lineage and their family and their tribe, they're all Levite, according to their different descendancy, their ancestry. And as they would do this, what would happen is, when it was their turn to serve, there would be a few opportunities for people during their turn to be the

priest who does the incense in the room inside the temple closest to the Holy of Holies. This was a once-in-a-lifetime moment. This was not something that each priest got to do each week, or, you know, it wasn't something that they took turns doing. It was you cast lots, and over the course of your life, if you got to do it once, you were lucky. And this is the moment that Zechariah is in. This is an incredible moment for him. It's a momentous moment, and we need to picture this moment in the way that it's being brought up, because when he comes into the room of the temple, he is standing before a giant curtain. It would have been 60 feet high, taller than the ceiling of this building. It would have been 30 feet wide, and on it would have been cherubim. And those are angels, and it was reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. And the idea was, is that for humans, as they came into the temple, and for those that could get to that place, even in the temple, there was a reminder that there was a separation between God and man. The curtain was four inches thick minimum. That's what we know from the author, Josephus. It's a very thick curtain. It was very difficult to tear or shred, but we know what happens to it at the end of the Gospel of Luke. When Jesus dies on the cross, the curtain is torn asunder.

The gospel begins with a priest in the temple reminding us of the separation between God and man. And the gospel comes to its climactic moment when it is torn asunder, because man and God can be together again because of the work of Christ.

At the hour of the of incense the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

Luke 1:10-11 CSB

***Zechariah, at the hour of the of incense, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him standing to the right of the altar of incense.*** And so Zechariah's in there. He's got this kind of stick thing that has a chain on it and then it's burning the incense and he's in there and he's doing his thing. And all of a sudden an angel of the Lord appeared to him.

When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and overcome with fear. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah..."

***Luke 1:12 CSB***

***When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and overcome with fear. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah."*** And this is where we're going to pause.

The passage begins. The gospel of Luke begins in the temple in front of the curtain that is a reminder of the separation of God and man. It begins with someone who is blameless and righteous in the sight of God and yet when an angel comes in the presence of God, what does he do? He's terrified. Because the holiness of God is not something that we can stand before because God and his perfection cannot allow sin in his presence and we, when we see God outside of the work of Christ, it is a thing of terror.

The first image we see in the Gospel of Luke is the separation of humanity and the reality of fear, even for those doing their best to be righteous and blameless before him.

**The Foundation of Our Hope**

The righteousness of our works will never be enough

***The righteousness of our works will never be enough.*** It wasn't enough for Zechariah and Elizabeth, and I promise your works will never be enough. They are commendable. I do not say this to knock them down in any way, shape, or form. But I say this because the presentation that we have in Luke is that the reality is, is that their fear, the fear and terror of Zechariah is the same that anyone would have outside of the work of Christ.

**The Foundation of Our Hope**

The righteousness of our works will never be enough

Our God is perfect in every way

And the reason for this is not about us. It's about God. ***Our God is perfect in every way.*** He is perfect in his holiness. He is set apart. He is righteous. He is good in every way. He will not allow sin to persist in his presence. And so for those who are sinful to stand before God in his presence, we not only realize we deserve destruction, but we realize how unworthy we are. Zechariah, who walks blameless and righteous in the sight of God, when he sees not God, but an angel coming from the presence of God down to talk to him, he realizes how unworthy he is. He is terrified, he is gripped with fear.

The reality is, is that this is the truth for anyone outside the work of Christ. What's fun is you go to the book of Acts, and after the Pentecost, after receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples, there's like the story then, two of them are in the jail, and an angel appears to them, and they're not scared at all. Why? Because they're covered by the work of Christ.

But before the work of Christ, to stand in the presence of God for any believer, it would be a thing that would draw us to fear.

***The righteousness of our works will never be enough. Our God is perfect in every way.***

And this is important for the foundation of our hope, because why would we hope in something less than a perfect God? Why would we hope for something that is made in an image that we can understand when God is far greater? He is creator. He is above all. He is before all. Why would we put our hope in something smaller? Why would we put our hope in something that we design and decide? Because I promise I know my plans and they don't work out. I know your plans don't work out. Things in this life we may have control of, but at some point we won't, right? Like you, you won't live forever no matter what you do in your own strength. You will not bring about everything that you want to have happen because we cannot. If we trust in our works, eventually we will be disappointed.

**The foundation of our hope** is not in our works. ***The righteousness of our works will never be enough.*** But ***Our God is perfect in every way.***

The passage, if we make it man-centered, is about two people disappointed at the start that the Lord had not answered their prayer. But that is not what we see. We see that they put their hope and focus in God. And because of that, we can rejoice in their example and follow it as well. ***Our God is perfect in every way.***

#### **The Foundation of Our Hope**

The righteousness of our works will never be enough

Our God is perfect in every way

The plans of God will never be impeded

The next part of **the foundation of our hope** that we see in this passage, first, ***the righteousness of our works will never be enough***, and ***our God is perfect in every way.*** The second, ***the plans of God will never be impeded. The plans of God will never be impeded.*** He is sovereign in every way.

When Zechariah saw him, he was **terrified** and **overcome with fear**. But the angel said to him, “Do not be **afraid**, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.

Luke 1:12-13 CSB

***When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and overcome with fear. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you will name him John.***

Now, if it just stop there, it would be the most wonderful news, right? For Zechariah and Elizabeth who have been praying, God has heard your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son and you will name him John. That is amazing news that they have been praying for, but there's more.

“There will be **joy** and **delight** for you, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or beer. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb.”

Luke 1:14-15 CSB

***“There will be joy and delight for you, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or beer. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb.”***

Now with these words, ***“there will be joy and delight for you, and many will rejoice.”*** The word joy, delight, and rejoice, again, these are three words that are exceeding joy words. You will be happy. You will be greatly happy. You will be blessed through this and so will many people.

And this word **delight**, I've been thinking about this word all week. Not just because I got off a plane and refreshed my phone and had delight when I saw the score of a game, but because when you have a meal, you know, and you cook the Thanksgiving turkey and you're pretty sure, but you cut into it and it's not raw and it's moist. Delightful. We have little delight moments, and then we have things that steal true joy and delight, right? Because on your phone, our phones are designed for dopamine hits. And we take little delight when, oh, I saw this thing that's fun, or I saw this thing I don't like, but now I saw a thing that we follow, we chase after delight in little ways. But this is talking about a delight that is full of depth. The delight that comes from the Lord answering a prayer that they have waited for for a very long time.

We don't know how old Elizabeth and Zechariah are. I just want to mention, if you're like, well, my study Bible says they were this old. I don't know where they got that information from. Different people have different guesses, but they're postmenopausal is what we should understand from the language earlier, but we are not sure how old they are. But what we are sure of is that they will have joy and delight from John, and not just them, but many.

***“He will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will never drink wine or beer, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb.”***

Now, that language of filled with the Holy Spirit, it is very important that we understand this language the way it is intended. This does not mean he's sealed by the Spirit for salvation in his mother's womb. This is Old Testament language, like the Spirit came on King Saul and on David and on different prophets at different times. The language here is not the language of salvation, but it's the language of God having a specific purpose.

Not a main point of this passage, but this passage is also one of those anchor texts for if you are a believer, you are required to be pro-life because within the womb, God gave John the Holy Spirit. Next week John, in the womb, will jump with delight when Mary shows up with Jesus in her womb. God sees conception as the moment of life. We should too.

He will **turn** many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to **turn** the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.”

Luke 1:16-17 CSB

After this, ***“he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.”*** (Luke 1:16-17, quoting Malachi 4:5-6)

Now this prophecy, Zechariah should know this the second he hears it. This is from **Malachi chapter 4:5-6**. It's the last of the minor prophets. God says this through Malachi:

Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

Malachi 4:5-6 CSB

***“Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, and he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.”*** (Malachi 4:5-6)

Now, these words—when you hear the “great and terrible day” and the “curse” language—you may be thinking, “What on earth is going on here?” Well, God is talking about the coming judgment, because someday—and we get to rejoice in this day, someday, as Pastor Dan said, when we celebrate communion, we celebrate the Lord’s return—someday, right, someday He’s returning, and on that final day of judgment, that will be a great day for all who believe, but a terrible day for all who do not. But the promise is that one will come like the prophet Elijah.

And the Israelites at this time assumed it would literally be Elijah, or maybe wouldn't literally be Elijah, depending on which sect you look at. But Elijah was a prophet in the Old Testament that did not die. He was taken up into heaven on a chariot in **2 Kings 1 and 2**. And the people of that day were waiting on someone to come like Elijah to prepare the way for the Messiah. And here we find out that it is John the Baptist and from before he was conceived God knew it would be him and what he would do.

He will **turn** many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to **turn** the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.”

Luke 1:16-17 CSB

Now the language is ***“he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God”*** and ***“turning the hearts of fathers to their children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.”***

The language here is a vertical and horizontal way of thinking and so I've got a graphic of this. Hopefully that makes sense. If you know the two greatest commandments in the Bible, what are they? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, strength, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God as the

language of loving the Lord your God. And turning the hearts of fathers to their children is to love your neighbor as yourself.

And you may say, well, Pastor Matt, how do you get fathers and children to neighbor as yourself? Well, in that day, what was happening, and we're going to see a lot of this as we go through Luke, the Pharisees and the other religious leaders were saying that in order for the Messiah to come, we must have a certain standard of righteousness. We must perfectly follow. They thought they could make themselves righteous by their works. If you know the teachings of Jesus, you know that the Pharisees were failing miserably. But by the standard of the law, they thought we're doing all the letter of the law, they misunderstood the spirit of the law, of course.

The people of that day were thinking, if we are good enough for God, God will come to us, but God instead sends someone in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way, a way that could not be prepared by people in their own works, but could only be prepared by God in his.

“How can I know this?” Zechariah asked the angel. “For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years.” The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and tell you this good news. Now listen. You will become silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.”

Luke 1:18-20 CSB

After Zechariah hears this, he hears his son will be the fulfillment of the prophecy of **Malachi 4**, his response is, “***How can I know this? For I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.***”

And “***How can I know this?***” is not just, Will this happen? He's kind of asking for proof. It's kind of a test. And it's funny because he doesn't say, ***How can I know this?*** How can I know what my son will do someday? He says, Well, I'm old. And my wife, very tactfully, he doesn't call her old, he says she is well along in years.

And this language is deeply ironic because as we've been reading through this passage, I hope you've been thinking a little bit about this guy, Abraham (Blessed through you: A Look at the life of Abram). I don't know if you remember our series over the summer in Genesis. There was this old guy named Abraham, and he had an old wife, a wife well along in years, and they had a child, right? at a very late age. And when we come here, we're seeing kind of the same thing take place.

In fact, kind of our big theme from like last May until we get through Easter, you can see the same skyline in every series. It was in the shield wall, it'll be in the next one too. But I show you this because we need to be thinking the stars in the heaven as we read this.

But when Zechariah asked this question, he's expressing doubt, and he's not expressing doubt about what God will do in the future. He's expressing doubt about what God has already revealed that God is able to do.

And because of this, the angel answered him, "***I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God.***"

Now, when he says, ***I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God***, we're not gonna spend much time on this today outside of saying Gabriel is mentioned in Daniel, chapters eight and nine. He's one of the key angels of God that is in the throne room of God.

***And I was sent to speak to you, and I will tell you this good news. Now listen, you will become silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."***

And so the outcome of Zechariah, who remember, he was righteous and blameless, but the outcome of this moment, because he doubts and expresses it, is that the Lord is going to make him silent until John is born.

#### **The Foundation of Our Hope**

The righteousness of our works will never be enough

Our God is perfect in every way

The plans of God will never be impeded

Our God is sovereign in every circumstance

And this brings us back to **the foundation of our hope**. Even though Zechariah doubts, God is still going to make it happen, still going to bring it to pass, and Zechariah is just going to be quiet while he does it.

What we see in this passage is that ***the plans of God will never be impeded***. Just like in Genesis, when we saw with Abraham and Sarah that what God intended He brought about, ***the plans of God will never be impeded*** because ***our God is sovereign in every circumstance***.

Now remember when we were in our Ephesians series, we talked about from before the foundations of the world. If you're a believer, God chose you as His child. You were dead, He made you alive. He and His sovereignty brought you to Him and made you a part of His family. That was a plan from before the fall. That was a plan from before Jesus, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, together, all three of them said, "Let there be light." That was a plan from before time began, as we understand it, because God is eternal. He has no beginning or end.

And God in His sovereignty, He knows what He's going to do and He is going to bring it about. Whether Zechariah believes or doesn't believe does not matter because God has said, here's what I'm going to do and therefore God will bring it about.

These are such wonderful words. This is something for us always to take hope in because God's promises are not dependent upon us.

I had a phone call yesterday with someone who asked for prayer because they are struggling in a sin issue and they said, "I, I'm worried that I've just fallen back into this pattern. And how can he love me if I can't overcome this?" And our whole conversation was about, well, he didn't start loving you because you overcame it. God and his sovereignty chose you as his child. God and his sovereignty has saved you. You need to repent. You need to turn away from this. But you need to not think that your salvation is built upon what you do, because then you would be sovereign. But he in his sovereignty has chosen you. He in his sovereignty loves you. That is why we put our hope in him.

The foundation of our hope is that he is perfect and that **he is sovereign in every circumstance.**

**The Foundation of Our Hope**

The righteousness of our works will never be enough

Our God is perfect in every way

The plans of God will never be impeded

Our God is sovereign in every circumstance

The purposes of the Lord will ultimately bless his people

And this brings us to the final point. ***The purposes of the Lord will ultimately bless his people. The purposes of the Lord will ultimately bless his people.***

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zachariah, amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them. Then they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was making signs to them and remain speechless.

Luke 1: 21 through 22 CSB

So while Zechariah is in there, ***the people were waiting for Zechariah, amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary.*** I always read this and I wonder if they're thinking, okay, dude, like, I get it. You're older. You want to stay in there as long as you can, but we got things to do. I don't know what they were thinking, but they're wondering because they're out there worshipping. It's a specific time of day where they worship the Lord. And now that time is coming to an end and he's not returning.

And then when ***he does come out, he could not speak to them. Then they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was making signs to them and remained speechless.***

And I love this moment in the broad theological implications of this passage, because we talk about the period from when the temple was rebuilt to this moment as a 400 year silence where God did not speak to his people. And it ends, and the first sign that that silence is over is silence. I love that. Every time I read this passage, I smile because God ended silence with silence.

And the people, they didn't know what was to come, but they knew something. The people didn't know that it was John in the spirit of Elijah who would come in spirit and power of Elijah, but they knew something was coming. And yet they didn't know what.

When the days of his ministry were completed, he went back home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived and kept herself in seclusion for five months. She said, "The Lord has done this for me. He has looked with favor in these days to take away my disgrace from among the people."

Luke 1:23-25 CSB

***When the days of his ministry were completed, he went back home. And after these days, his wife, Elizabeth, conceived and kept herself in seclusion for five months. And she said, "The Lord has done this for me. He has looked with favor in these days to take away my disgrace from among the people."***

And what wonderful words. Because again, in their day, the general thought would have been, well, since she doesn't have children, behind the scenes, there's sin. And yet God flips it into this incredible thing that she is pregnant in her old age. And she gives glory to God. This is Zechariah will in a couple weeks when we look at the birth of John.

#### **The Foundation of Our Hope**

The righteousness of our works will never be enough

Our God is perfect in every way

The plans of God will never be impeded

Our God is sovereign in every circumstance

The purposes of the Lord will ultimately bless his people

***The purposes of the Lord will ultimately bless his people.*** And, and this, idea of will ultimately bless his people. There's big answered prayer and little answered prayer. The biggest answered prayer, the people of Israel were waiting for the Messiah to come. And it is through this announcement that we see the beginning of the coming of the Messiah in the Gospel of Luke and how God will answer the ultimate prayer, which is how can we get past the curtain? How can we return to the presence of God?

But he also cares for the little promises. He didn't have to choose Elizabeth and Zechariah, but he did.

Whenever I read this passage, I think of Ruth. If you read the book of Ruth, it is the most seemingly mundane small story in the world about a couple people in kind of a weird situation during the time of the judges, when everyone in Israel was kind of a punk, but you see Boaz was faithful, you see Naomi, kind of faithful, and you see Ruth, who turns to the Lord and out of that, you get the line of David. And you see how the Lord works in incredible ways and in ways that are seemingly impossible in Abraham and Sarah, and now in Zechariah and Elizabeth and through these stories, you see how God blesses his people in small ways and in big ways.

And again, I want to encourage you when you read this, the application of this passage is not if you pray to God, he will answer your prayers. It's that if you place your hope in God, ultimately you will not be disappointed. Whether in this life or not, he answers your prayers. ***The purposes of the Lord will ultimately bless his people.***

It both blesses Zechariah and Elizabeth. They have joy and delight. And it blesses the people of Israel because in a few short chapters, we are going to read as John the Baptist at the river of Jordan is baptizing and people are coming and saying, what should we do? And he's pointing them to the kingdom of God and the gospel. And we see how the Lord works in mighty ways through John the Baptist and preparing the people.

And that preparation isn't the final part of the picture because of course that leads to Christ who he's baptized by John and he begins his ministry and ultimately through his death and resurrection, the curtain is torn, and we are able to stand in God's presence.

#### **The Foundation of Our Hope**

The righteousness of our works will never be enough

Our God is perfect in every way

The plans of God will never be impeded

Our God is sovereign in every circumstance

The purposes of the Lord will ultimately bless his people

Our God is at work for our good in everything

***The purposes of the Lord will ultimately bless his people. Our God is at work for our good in everything.*** And that promise is not for everyone, it's for believers.

If you're a believer, when you read through these passages, and when you think about these things, we can trust that the Lord ultimately has our good in mind. It may not come about in the way that we think it should, but remember, our good is what he has in mind. Christ died on the cross for us. And God ultimately had our good in mind as our savior was killed. Our picture of salvation comes from Jesus saying, "God, if there's any other way, then not my will, but yours be done."

If our hope is that God will do things the way we want, then our hope is in ourselves. But if our hope is in him, we will find ultimately that we will be blessed through it because he is perfect, he is sovereign, and he is at work for our good and everything.

The foundation of our hope comes in the work of Christ. It comes in the work of God who is at work even today and who we can put our hope and our faith and our trust in.

I wanna encourage you this week as we leave, as we consider what do we do with this? First and foremost, I want to encourage you, take the example of Zechariah and Elizabeth to heart. Their faithfulness did not depend on God answering their prayers, but upon God's character and who he was, who he is. He's not, he has no beginning and end, so we can't talk about him in the past tense, but their faith depended on their understanding of who he is. We should do the same.

Whether he is answering our prayers or again, if he says, "no" when we pray, no is an answer to a prayer. We don't like to hear that, but God does not always answer our prayers the way that we want, but it is ultimately for our good. The picture he sees is far greater than what we see.

Paul in the book of Romans, **Romans chapter 8**, if you wanna be encouraged this week by the foundation of our hope, read **Romans 8**. Read it every day. When you read through it, you see that God works all things together for his good. And we're blessed through that. And when Paul mentions that, he talks about those who follow after him, there's going to be persecution in this life. There is going to be trial, there's going to be struggles, and yet nothing can separate us from the love of God.

The foundation of our hope is not built on us. It's not built on anything we do or could do. It is entirely built upon the work of Christ. Because of that, we can hope and we can trust in all that he has promised. Can trust because it is secure for us today just as it was secure for Zechariah and Elizabeth and they put their hope and trust in him not knowing the mystery of the gospel we're on the other side of the resurrection of Jesus, we know God's solution for death and sin the blood of Christ and through his resurrection we know that death has no sting. We know that already right now our hope is secure in what Christ has done, and we know someday he will return and we will see it in its fullness.

Our hope today and our hope for all eternity is built on Christ and all that he has done.

**The Foundation of Our Hope** is that ***our God is perfect in every way. Our God is sovereign in every circumstance, and our God is at work for our good in everything.***

We should faithfully follow like Zechariah and Elizabeth. And we should put our trust in him in every circumstance.

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, we thank you for this day. We thank you, Lord, that you hear our prayers. We thank you, Lord, that you respond to them. And Lord, we thank you that you respond to them knowing a greater picture than we ever could. We thank you, Lord, that as we cry out to you, we can trust in your promises. We can trust that you will bring things together for your good, and we can trust all of this because we see proof in the death and resurrection of your Son. We thank you, Lord, that as we begin this Christmas season, that we celebrate that you sent your Son, that he died in our place, the curtain tore. He rose, and he reigns, and he is returning someday. We praise you, Lord, and we praise you that we will get to worship you forever. And we pray now as we lift our voices that you would hear our prayer as they cry to you and that our worship would be acceptable in your sight oh Lord we pray all of this in the name of Jesus amen.*



Digging Deeper – **The Foundation of Our Hope** – Luke 1:5-25

1. What stood out to you from the sermon?
2. What is the longest you have ever waited for something in your life and received it? How did it feel to wait for it? Did you ever wonder if you would ever receive it?

**Read Luke 1:5-25**

3. What stands out to you as you read through the passage?
4. As a group, talk about all you know about the temple. What imagery is present in the temple? Why is it important that Zechariah is in the temple? What does the temple represent?
5. When Zechariah first sees Gabriel, how does he respond? How does this compare to other instances of people seeing angels in Scripture?
6. What are all the promises made about the son to be born named John? What do we know of how these promises were completed in John the Baptist's life?
7. Why does Zechariah struggle to believe? What comes of his unbelief?
8. How does Elizabeth respond when she finds out she is pregnant? What can we learn from her response?
9. Think of all the parallels to Elizabeth and Zechariah you see in the Old Testament? List them off as a group.
10. What do we learn about God from this passage?
11. What does this passage teach us about hope?
12. How should this passage impact how we pray?
13. Is there something you pray and hope for that you have not yet received? Share it with the group and ask for prayer.
14. Take some time to end in prayer by sharing prayer requests and praying for one another.