

# Zacharias and the Birth of John

Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

What sorts of things do people promise to one another?

Why do we sometimes add the words "I promise" to what we say?

Are people's promises ever broken?

## Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Your promises are the most important truths we have. You promised and sent Your Son who took our sins away. You have promised to be with us always. You have promised to take us to heaven. Help us remember that all Your promises are sure! Amen.



## The Story ( Luke 1:5-25; 57-80)

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (6) And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (7) But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

(8) So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, (9) according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. (10) And the whole multitude of the people was

praying outside at the hour of incense.

(11) Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. (12) And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. (13) But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. (14) And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. (15) For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. (16) And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the



Lord their God. (17) He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

(18) And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

(19) And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. (20) But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

(21) And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. (22) But when he came out, he could not speak to them, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. (

23) So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. (24) Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, (25) "This the Lord hath dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me to take away my reproach among people."

(57) Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. (58) When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

(59) So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. (60) His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John"

(61) But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." (62) So they made signs to his father – what he would have him called. (63) And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled.

(64) Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.

(65) Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. (66) And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

(67) Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: (68) "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, (69) And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, (70) As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, (71) That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, (72) To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, (73) The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: (74) To grant that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, (75) In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

(76) "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, (77) To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, (78) Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the

Dayspring from on high has visited us; (79) To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

(80) So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the desert still the day of his manifestation to Israel.

**Recalling Details** - Retell the story in five sentences.

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### **What the Story Tells Us**

**God sends John as a messenger to prepare for Jesus' coming.**

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### **Discussion Questions**

1. How do you know that Zacharias and Elizabeth were believers?
2. What did God promise and how did He fulfill it?
3. What was the consequence of Zacharias' doubting?
4. Name two of the main points in Zacharias' song.
5. Compare Mary's Question, "How can this be?" (Luke 1:34) with Zacharias' "How shall I know this?" (Luke 1:18). How are the questions similar and different?

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### **What God Tells Us**

**God keeps His promises.**

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## Passages

(Matthew 28:20) Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

(Joshua 1:9) "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

(Romans 8:28) And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

(Hebrews 13:5) Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

## Hymn

Look at the Lutheran Hymnal 91, 1-4. Find at least three ways it applies to today's lesson.

## Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, We have learned that You keep all Your promises to us. When our reason would make us doubt Your Word and our patience wears thin, overcome our doubt and strengthen our faith to believe Your promises will be fulfilled according to Your wise plans. Send Your Holy Spirit on us that we may be bold in believing Your promises of forgiveness, of life and salvation in Jesus and so reach the home You have promised to all who believe in Jesus. Amen.