

## Introduction

- <https://www.foxnews.com/us/georgia-fugitive-arrested-replying-sheriffs-department-most-wanted-facebook-post-what-about-me> Maybe he felt left out?
- This Christmas - I don't want you to feel left out. God has done a work of grace to include you in His family. He has saved you for His purpose.
- Are you prepared for God's purpose for your life?
- We spend a lot of time preparing. You got to college to prepare for a career. Or, you work for 40 years and faithfully put money away into a 401K to prepare for retirement.
- Athletes - you prepare for the big game by practicing. I prepare for half-marathons by running. I prepared for concerts for constantly practicing piano.
- Are you prepared for the work God wants to do in your life?
- Or, what do you need to be prepared for as a follower of Jesus?
- Zechariah's song about the birth of John the Baptizer - the one who would prepare the way for Jesus.
- His song a good reminder how we need to prepare if we are going to follow Jesus well.
- Three ways you need to be prepared if you are going to follow Jesus well and live out your purpose.

## Be prepared to take a backseat.

- It's been 9 months since Gabriel visited Zechariah. Because of his unbelief, Zechariah stricken to silence. Mary had visited Elizabeth. Both women know that the children they are carrying in their wombs are significant.
- The birth of Elizabeth's son is a day her whole town is waiting for. An old woman having a baby - this must be a work of God. An old man priest mute after serving in the temple - must be a work of God.
- Child born - 8 days later to be circumcised - Jewish custom that marked the child as belonging to the people of God. 8th day - official naming of the child. Friends and relatives gathered for the important event.
- Everyone wants the name of the child to be Zechariah. Name him after his father so this child can carry on the family name. Zechariah old. Won't be around forever. He needs a namesake. Elizabeth: "He will be called John." Friends confused. "No one in your family has that name."
- Mute Zechariah - what does he think about this? On a tablet writes, "His name is John."
- Ancient culture, just like modern culture, a great joy to name your child. But, God has already determined the fate of this child. God has even determined the name of this child. Zechariah and Elizabeth don't get the privilege to name their own child.
- Immediately, Zechariah's mouth opened, and words of praise erupt from his mouth.
- Note how his praise starts. He doesn't start by praising God for the child that was just born to his wife. He praises God for the child that will be born to Mary. (When Luke and Hudson were born, I didn't praise God for the child born in the next room. I praised God for my children!)
- vs. 68 - God has finally visited His people - redemption is coming. Remember, 400 years of no prophetic word to God's people - people still waiting for God to fulfill His promise. Finally, it's happening.
- Zechariah knows his OT - child in Mary's womb from the lineage of David as promised - the child the prophets foretold ([Is. 9](#)) - Salvation is coming (vs. 71). God has remembered the promise He made to Abraham (vs. 73).

- Note - Zechariah and Elizabeth taking a backseat - it's NOT their child that's the Promised One - it's Mary's child!
- Zechariah could have said it's not fair - he and Elizabeth were far more qualified to be the parents of Jesus. They were priests, faithful, older, wiser, etc. Was it fair that a teenage girl who had no qualifications be the mother of the Messiah? What qualifications did Mary have?
- If you are going to live for God's purpose you need to be prepared to take a backseat. It's not about you, what you think is fair, or what you think you're qualified to do.
- We don't want to take a backseat. We want to compare ourselves to others and say, "I deserve..." You want to be the star of the show.
- **The more you compare, the more you will say, "life's not fair."** - Temptation to always compare - why does so and so seem to be so blessed, and I don't? We have a tendency to compare everything - lifestyles, careers, etc. Just live the life God has called you to.
- **The more you rely on your qualifications, the more you will say "Why not me?"** We all have a tendency to look at God and say, "Look at me! Look at what've done! I'm qualified for..." Living out God's purpose is NOT about you qualifying it's about God choosing to accomplish His purpose in the world through whomever He chooses.
- God works according to His plan, not yours. If you're going to follow God, be prepared to take a backseat.

## Be prepared to prepare.

- Zechariah praises God for the baby in Mary's womb, and then he praises God for the child born to his wife.
- This old priest who at first doubted Gabriel's message now believes. He knows the role John the Baptizer will play in redemptive history.
- About John: "prophet of the Most High." John will serve God's agenda. "You will go before the Lord to prepare His ways."
- Not only prepare the way but "give people knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of sins." (vs. 77)

- Zechariah, this old priest who served as a mediator between God and man, knows what the people need - a true mediator - one who can really forgive sins. Zechariah knows that his nation's biggest problem is not Rome but their own hearts. He knows the affect that sin has had on the nation of Israel. He knows the story of his people.
- Zechariah's son would prepare the way for the ONE who would forgive sins.
- Tremendous responsibility for Zechariah - to prepare his son to prepare the way.
- Zechariah is a different kind of dad. Think about the dreams that most of us dads have for our children: follow in our footsteps vocationally, get a good education, be a great athlete, get married and have lots of kids, etc. None of that on Zechariah's mind. One goal for John: fulfill God's will - make much of Jesus.
- Think about what it must have been like to raise John. Everyday Zechariah reminded John of his significant role. Everyday Zechariah teaching John the things of God. Zechariah described as righteous in Ch. 1 - he teaches John what it looks like to be righteous.
- If you're going to follow Jesus well be prepared to prepare. Your calling in life is to prepare others to follow Jesus - to be a disciple maker - in your home, in your school, in your workplace, etc. It's to pass on what's been entrusted to you. ([2 Tim. 2:2](#), [Titus 2:2](#))
- What am I supposed to pass on?
  - **Knowledge** - Teach the things of God.
  - **Passion** - We want to pass on a passionate love for God and passion for His mission. We don't want to pass on a lifeless, ritualistic religion.
  - **Character** - We want to see people growing in the fruit of the Spirit.
- As a parent, I want to see my kids grow in these three areas. As a disciple maker, I want to see the guys I disciple grow in these three areas.
- How do I pass on what's been entrusted to me? I must realize that I will pass on who I am. Therefore:

- **I'm learning.** I need to commit myself to knowing God's Word well.
- **I'm loving.** I'm going to remind myself of God's love for me so that my love for Him will grow.
- **I'm serving.** I'm going to engage myself in God's mission so that those I'm preparing will see me faithfully serving the Lord.
- **I'm looking in.** Constantly examining where I need to grow in Christian character/Fruit of the Spirit.

## Be prepared to let go.

- John was Zechariah and Elizabeth's son, but they never ultimately laid claim to his life. Ultimately, their child belonged to God.
- What kind of parent would want for their child the kind of life that John had? "Go live in the wilderness by the river, wear clothes made from camel hair, and eat bugs and honey." That's every parents' dream for the life of their child, right? But Zechariah and Elizabeth let go of John. He was in God's hands.
- Yet, John became the kind of man who did what he saw his parents do: he let go. He realized his life did not belong to him. He lived for Christ. I can't help but think that he learned this from his parents.
- When Jesus comes to the wilderness John says, "Here He is! The Messiah!" Later, "I must decrease, you must increase."
- **Joy is found in letting go of what you hold dear for the sake of the Kingdom, not holding on for the sake of yourself.**
- If you're a parent, your children belong to God. If you're married, your spouse belongs to God. If you're single, your friends that are dear to you belong to God.
- We want to hold on to people as if God created the people we love solely for us - for our enjoyment, for our satisfaction, etc. God has created the people you love ultimately for His glory! NOT for you.
- Prayer for your children, friends, spouse, etc: "God use them for your glory even if that means I don't get everything I want out of this"

relationship.” (e.g., sacrifice of my wife - she wants my time - but she knows the demands of God’s calling on my life. Almost 15 years of ministry she has never guilted me for time given to ministry.)

- There is much joy in letting go... In saying to God, “The people I love most are in your hands. You do in their lives what you desire.”
- **Remember what God let go of for you.** He sacrificed His own Son because He loves you. He sent His Son into this world to die the death you deserve because of your rebellion. Jesus died for you and rose again for you so your sins could be forgiven and you could be given the gift of life.
- When you realize what God the Father let go of for you as a display of His love for you, you can let go for Him. You can let go of your ambitions, your desires, your goals, your hard-headed ways because you realize everything you want out of life is fleeting and everything God wants for your life is eternal.
- This morning, will you find the joy of letting go? Will you repent of trying to hold on to control of everything in your life, even trying to hold on to the people you love instead of placing them in God’s hands and saying, “They belong to you?” Will you let go of your will and live for God’s will?
- Unbeliever, will you believe that the greatest joy to be found is in Christ who will give you true purpose? Will you turn to Him by faith?