

Tommy Meador / General

Luke: The Promised King / Luke 1:1–25

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## Introduction

- <https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/woman-calls-911-report-pink-meat-north-carolina-barbecue-restaurant> - Woman didn't get what she expected...
- The Christmas story is the story of the unexpected. Who would have expected that God would step into history in the first century? God was at work in an unexpected way, unexpected time, among an unexpected people, in an unexpected place.
- Luke's Gospel opens with a story of an unexpected skeptic.
- Luke's Gospel the Gospel for skeptics. Luke writes to Gentile audience - people who would have been very skeptical of a Jewish Messiah who came to save the whole world.
- Luke's Gospel opens with the story of a skeptic: Zechariah. His initial response to the work that God wanted to do in his life and his nation was unbelief.
- Do you struggle with unbelief? Are you skeptical of God? Initial response: "No, I'm a follower of Jesus. I believe!"
- But, do you live as if you believe that God is able to do more than you can ask for or think? ([Ephesians 3:20-21](#)) Do you live as if you believe that God can give you victory over sin? Do you live as if you believe that God can restore broken relationships? Or, are you skeptical? Is your attitude as follower of Jesus, "It could never happen..."
- This morning, three barriers that keep us from believing that God is able to do more than we can think or ask.

# Story:

- Gospel of Luke = Volume 1 of Luke's story. Volume 1: The Gospel of Jesus. Volume 2: Acts - The birth of the church.
- Luke was a physician ([Colossians 4:14](#)). He's a careful researcher. He's investigated. He's interviewed people. (It may be that he interviewed Zechariah to hear his story.) Luke writes to Theophilus "lover of God" so that Theophilus can be certain of what's happened. (Is Theophilus a real person or symbolic of all lovers of God?)
- What happened: Herod, King of Judea. Herod appointed by Rome, not the Jews. Judea under Roman oppression. Israel longs for a day of freedom.
- NOT the fate Israel expected. Old Testament story ends with the people coming out of exile and repopulating the land. They're a different people. They're no longer given to idolatry like their ancient ancestors.
- No longer idolatrous and increasingly religious - Pharisees and Sadducees who put unnecessary religious demands on the people.
- No Word from God for 400 years. No prophets. God had been silent.
- In difficult times, a devoted priest, Zechariah, and his wife, Elizabeth - both from the priestly line of Aaron.
- Both righteous - lived godly lives. You don't read this about the Pharisees and Sadducees in Luke's Gospel, but you read about the godliness of this elderly couple.
- They trusted God but disappointed with life - no child. Barrenness = a punishment for sinful lives, but they lived righteous lives.
- 24 divisions of priests - Twice a year Zechariah went to Jerusalem. 24,000 priests in Israel, 1,000 in each division. So many priest that it was the highlight of your career to go into the temple and burn incense. If the lot fell to you, you went in and burned incense, and you never had the opportunity again.
- On this day, the lot fell on this old man. The joy and anticipation. He walks into the holy place for the first time in his life. He's overwhelmed.

He sees the gold overlays and carvings. He sees the table of shewbread. He sees the altar of incense. He sees the veil that separates the holy place from the holy of holies.

- As he gets ready to burn incense, he prays. He prays for his people. He prays for their freedom. Maybe he even prays for a Messiah to rescue them. He prays for his wife... Maybe, "Lord, why?"
- Gabriel appears - multitude of angels, but only two named in the Bible: Gabriel and Michael.
- Terrified... Was God judging him? "Do not be afraid... Your prayer has been heard. You will have a son..."
- John to be set apart from birth. (Nazarite vow.) Devoted to the Lord's work. A son that would prepare the way for the Lord - John the Baptist. Jesus said, "No one greater than John the Baptist." ([Luke 7:28](#))
- John fulfillment of [Malachi 3:1](#), [4:4-6](#). John had one job: point people to and prepare them for the coming King.
- Zechariah and Elizabeth waited for a child for years - would never have imagined that the child God would give them would play such an important role in the history of salvation.
- Zechariah's response: skepticism. "I'm old... So is my wife..." An angel standing in front of you, how do you not believe? What about you... God has spoken to you through His Son. How can you be skeptical?
- Gabriel: "You won't speak until the child is born because you did not believe."
- People outside waiting. Zechariah exits temple, and he can't speak. He opens his mouth - no words come out. People knew that something happened in the holy place. God was no longer silent.
- Went home, Elizabeth became pregnant. "God has taken away my disgrace."
- Zechariah is the unexpected skeptic - a believer in God who we expect to respond in faith - not a lack of faith.

- Even though we're a people of faith, we all have moments of lack of faith. Why? What hinders our faith? What barriers do we put up in our own lives that keep us from believing that God is able to more than we can think or imagine?

## **I focus on my limitations and not God's limitless power.**

- I can't vs. God can. In this story, Zechariah focused on his biology and not a correct theology.
- **God can't use me because...** (Fill in the blank. My time of usefulness has passed, my lack of giftedness, etc.)
- **God won't use me because...** (Fill in the blank. A past sin, an addictive lifestyle, that divorce you went through, etc.)
- What you put in the blank becomes your excuse for unbelief. Your limitations become your filter for how you view God's work in your life. Instead of believing in the power of a supernatural, sovereign God, you end up limiting God's work in your life because of your own perceived limitations.

## **I focus on my disappointments and not God's guaranteed promises.**

- The guaranteed promise: God will accomplish His purpose to redeem you and bring you into His eternal presence. Nothing can thwart God's promise.
- In Zechariah's life - God bringing about His guaranteed promise to the world.
- They prayed, and God hadn't answered. Elizabeth carried the disgrace of barrenness.
- In disappointment, we doubt and question, we lose hope, and if not careful, we'll turn to another savior. When disappointed we:

- **You blame the thing that disappointed you.** You blame your spouse, try to find salvation in another lover. Your job, so you blame it, and find salvation in alcohol to ease your depression.
- **You blame yourself.** You think you're the problem. You're the reason why your life is so hard. You believe the lie of the enemy: "I can never do anything right." In this line of thinking you start to believe: "God can't love me." So, in your mind, no hope of salvation.
- **You blame the world.** No real happiness in the world. You're cynical and judgmental. Life just isn't fair. In this line of thinking, you think, "There can't be any salvation."
- **Or, you realize that God is at work even in seasons of disappointment.** Yes, life is full of disappointments, but God never disappoints. He is faithful, and He is at work to bring His promises to fruition in your life.
- You have to keep coming back to the truth rather than your perceived reality. Truth: God is at work. You can believe Him. You can trust Him. You can walk by faith.

## **I focus on my religious obligations and not God's transforming Word.**

- Meeting with God's messenger was not on Zechariah's agenda in the temple. Doing his religious duty was.
- Three questions to ask every time we gather:
  - **Why am I here?** Why did you get up this morning and come to church? Tradition? Right thing to do? What was your real motivation?
  - **What do I expect from God?** Do you expect God to change you? To point out sin in your life? Do you expect to encounter His grace? Do you expect God to challenge you in your faith, to grow you? Do you expect God to call you to obey? For many of us, we expect God to leave us alone. Your mindset sometimes: "I did my part, now I can get on with life."

- **What does God want from me?** God might not want you to be the parent of John the Baptist, but God does want something from you: your worship and your obedience.
- We can't forget that the Christian faith is far more than adhering to religious obligation. The Christian faith is a dynamic relationship with the God of all creation who wants to transform you and use you for His glory. Does the way you approach God demonstrate that you believe that God wants to powerfully transform your life for His glory?
- [Luke 1](#) - the start of the Christmas story - A story that calls us to believe - to believe that God so loved the world, that He so loves you, that at the right time, according to His will, He sent His Son into the world. The Son of God, born as a baby in Bethlehem - a baby that would grow in the wisdom and stature of God. A baby who is the Savior of the World. This child promised in the Old Testament lived a perfect life and died as a substitute for you. He rose again three days later so you could have the gift of life abundant and eternal.
- This morning, if not a follower of Jesus, you can believe. You can place your faith in Him by turning from your sins and turning to Jesus by faith.
- This morning, follower of Jesus, what barriers have you erected in your walk with the Lord that keep you skeptical of the work that God wants to do in your life? Repent of those barriers!