

## GOD TOUCHES ONE LIFE

Sermon : When God touches a life , relationship with others on this earth are impacted

Question to answer: What happens when God touches one life?

Theology: The saving grace of Christ is for all

### **Luke 1:1 - 23**

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.

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.

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. 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.”

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#### The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

34 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[b] the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age,

and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail.”

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

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The Bishop of Syria wrote in 420 A.D. wrote about a Monk who travelled from near modern day turkey to Rome "Honorius, ( the emperor of the Roman Empire) who inherited the empire of Europe, put a stop to the gladiatorial combats which had long been held at Rome.

The occasion of his doing so arose from the following circumstance:

A certain man of the name of Telemachus had embraced the ascetic life. (monk’s life)

He had set out from the East and for this reason had arrived in Rome.

There, when the abominable spectacle was being exhibited,

he went himself into the stadium ( the colosseum),

and stepping down into the arena, endeavored to stop

the men who were wielding their weapons against one another ( until the death).

The spectators of the slaughter were indignant,

and inspired by the fury of the demon who delights in those bloody deeds,  
( and )stoned the peacemaker to death.

When the admirable emperor was informed of this  
He numbered Telemachus in the number of victorious martyrs,  
and put an end to that impious spectacle."

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This story of one man has been told for centuries including by President Ronald  
Reason at the National Prayer breakfast in 1984.

But why am I sharing it this on a Sunday in advent?

How does gladiators, ----emperors---- and the Colosseum  
relate to the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, angels, and the expectations of the  
birth of Jesus Christ?

Luke 1 is filled with examples of how God touched a single life and that power  
touched others around them.

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Zechariah, a priest, serving with 24 priest who were all descendants of King David.  
On day recounted, Zechariah was to enter the Holy of Holies in the temple in  
Jerusalem.

Here he would burn an incense and the smoke,  
which would symbolize the prayers of those outside the temple  
rising to God in heaven.

It was believed that the presence of God was in this holy of holies. The Priests  
would not linger long here because of the intensity of the presence of God.

We read in verse 21 that the people were waiting and wondering why Zechariah  
did not come out.

When he does emerge he cannot speak. In that moment, God touched the life of  
Zechariah,

but those praying at the temple were also touched. A human rendered mute adds a visual sign of God's power and we can imagine their prayers intensified.

When nine months later he is able to speak

when his son, a miracle baby, born late in his parent's life, those same witness would have been filled with wonder.

As Zechariah began to speak: He praises God.

The people were filled with awe and in verse 65 we read "throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things".

God touched the life of Zechariah

but the power of God was felt by those who simply observed God's answer to Zechariah prayers.

This faithful priest was blessed by God and give him all the glory and praise.

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God's touch on Elizabeth was also powerful

and physical for all to see.

Her pregnancy is late life.

A barren woman that was one of the most disgraceful predicament during this age.

Children were the only hope of care as you age. They were a way of generating prosperity from unpaid labor. Children were view as the highest of God's blessing for a woman.

The effect of God's touch upon Elizabeth

did not have as wide an audience as her husbands:

we are told she remained in seclusion for 5 months.

But in her sixth month or pregnancy, her relative Mary travelled from Nazareth to the hill country.

God touched the life inside of Elizabeth. And Elizabeth gasps and exclaims Blessed are you and the child you carry!

If we put ourselves in Mary's place:

An engaged woman,

who finds herself pregnant before she becomes a wife.

Visited by an Angel PAUSE

She felt:

Confusion

Fear

But the angel said something about my relative Elizabeth.

Perhaps she will help me understand, PAUSE

know what to expect .....

I can share my story with her

Mary entered Zechariah's home and when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting.....

Before she even sees Mary

The Baby leaps inside her PAUSE

And Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit

And exclaims: Blessed are you and the child you carry.

Even before Mary can blurt out the story

Tell Elizabeth - I am pregnant

The angel was right – Elizabeth would know

Would understand

PAUSE

Mary would stay for 3 months with Zechariah and Elizabeth

And by touching Elizabeth's life with pregnancy

We can imagine the comfort

These women shared with one another

An older one --- farther along in pregnancy

A younger, unmarried one just beginning to understand her pregnancy

God touched Elizabeth's life,

But Oh ---

how it affected Mary's!

PAUSE-----

Mary ----- the third person in Luke 1:

God touched Mary's life by giving to her a weight to carry

How can I be pregnant?

An angel tells me a Holy Spirit will come upon me

What does that mean?

I will give Birth to the son of the Most High

And if all that was not enough

At nine months pregnant --- I have to ride a donkey all the way to Bethlehem!

But how touched are we 2000 years later:

At the sharing of her story

The mother of our savior

The hope for all

For all time

Because the Lord first touched the life of Mary

It affected history

Generations

Through wars and Governments

Kings and Presidents

Poor and grieving

Rich and strong

PAUSE

Calling all of us to prepare the coming of Jesus Christ

Preparing for His coming once again PAUSE

We should be in awe that as God has touched the life of a monk,--- a virgin,--- a priest--- and an old woman

In our preparations this advent

Know that as He touches your life -----

He touches so many more lives

Because He came so that none should perish.