

# #1 “Surprise” // Luke 1:5–25 // Kingdom Come

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## **Announcement:**

There is a time for everything in the life of the church. Now is the time to pray; Prayer meetings at all of our campuses this Wednesday at 6:30. I expect you all to be there.

## **Intro to Kingdom Come:**

We begin a new series this morning... STUDY GUIDES

Luke is, in many ways, the Gospel for skeptics. Luke shows you how the Kingdom of Jesus was unlike anything anyone expected; everyone was surprised, and people often rejected the Kingdom of Jesus because it was so different than what they were looking for.

The secular and religious establishments both hated Jesus; both said, “There’s no way this could be the one we’ve been waiting for.” Luke shows you that Jesus’ life ended in a joint execution project between the religious and governmental powers of the day. Jesus’ Kingdom was inexplicable.

But Luke also shows you that the Kingdom of Jesus was, if your eyes and heart were open, undeniable...

What you’re going to learn throughout this series is that faith, real faith, arises when the **inexplicable meets the undeniable**.

Doubt is not always a bad thing... superficialities of faith meet the realities of the world... foot poised

This is going to be fun, so let’s get started.

## **The Gospel for Skeptics:**

We’re going to see, right of the bat, **Luke present the Gospel to two kinds of skeptics**. The first kind, that we’re going to look at today, is the person whose skepticism arises from the fact that they have been really disappointed in life.

Life has damaged them in a way that they don’t know how they could believe in the idea of a good God who has unwavering intentions for good in their life. (In a couple of weeks we’ll look at how Luke deals with the doubter who has intellectual problems with Christianity); but the 1<sup>st</sup> kind of doubter Luke deals with is those whose doubts arise from a disappointment with life.

Some of you are right there. You have a problem believing in God because of pain, disappointment, and unanswered questions in your life. I deal with people all the time like this... doubt doesn’t come from a philosophy book they’ve read but just from the fact that they don’t see how a good God could be watching over their lives and it have turned out like it did... *In my experience, this is the more significant type of doubt...*

The first story of Luke is about a couple of people who are broken-hearted because they’ve always wanted to have kids but never had them, and now they’re old and it looks like they’ve totally missed out on this. And you’re going to see how the birth of Jesus speaks into this.

Not Jesus’ parents...

So, let’s jump right into it. **LUKE 1... (have your Bibles? If you promise to bring your Bible next week, if not you have to keep your eyes lowered)** <sup>5</sup> In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah.

And he (Zechariah) had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup> And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. <sup>7</sup> But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

- **Barrenness...** they had no kids; in those days, there was hardly anything worse for a couple.
  - It meant having someone to take care of you when you were older (pre-401K's) and a continuing stake in Israel's future (how they understood the promises).
- For years Zechariah and Elizabeth had hoped for a son. But year after year, they cycled through hope and disappointment.
  - Elisabeth would get up one morning, feel a little dizzy, or nauseous, and think, "This is it!" But then a couple of weeks later she'd come to the heartbreaking realization that, again, that was a false hope. WOMAN IN ARTICLE
  - Maybe there were a couple of miscarriages involved... but after years of cycles and hope and disappointment, they have resolved themselves to the fact that they are never going to have children.
  - And so by this point a kind of a permanent disappointment has set in on them.
- Plus, they had to deal with all the questions people asked about them... "Oh yeah, Zechariah and Elisabeth... I wonder what is wrong with them? I wonder why God is displeased with them." *What don't we know about them?*
- Let me ask you this: Do you have something in your life like this? Something you can't understand why God hasn't given it to you?
  - God, why don't we have kids? We'd make great parents...
  - God, why am I not married? I'm watching everyone else...

- God, why was I overlooked again for promotion?
- Why can't we ever seem to round the corner financially...? I look at other people my age...
- Why are my kids not normal?
- And do you feel the sting of what other people say about you?
  - I have a friend who was single for a long time... and he said that as he got older he was aware the people would ask—sometimes they would do it directly... So what is wrong with you? Why can't you get married? For every 1 that said it to his face, 10 said it behind his back
    - *"He's not single for a season; he's single for a reason."*
  - Another one of my friends said he got so sick of the patronizing statements people would make to him... he said he'd be at weddings at his church, and little old ladies would come up to him and say so condescendingly, *"Bless your heart... (which is Southern for 'you poor idiot')... Don't worry, honey. You're next."* He got so tired of it he told me that he started saying to those same little old ladies at funerals, *"Don't worry honey, you're next."* Kidding. Unkind. Lord, I'm sorry.
- But look... see, the Bible is very careful to note this was not a curse... they were righteous and had walked blamelessly before the Lord.
  - This doesn't mean they were sinless, but that they hadn't done anything that singled them out for God's judgment.
  - But I'm sure there were still a lot of times that Zechariah and Elisabeth asked themselves, "God, what have we done wrong? What's wrong with us?"

<sup>8</sup> Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, <sup>9</sup> according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense...

- So, the different divisions of priests rotated through offering sacrifices in the temple. Well, during the rotation, one of the priests was chosen by the rolling of dice to be the one to go into the very Holy of Holies and offer incense before God. There were 1000's of priests. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and the lot falls on Zechariah.

<sup>11</sup> And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

- Now, notice the detail. One of the things that characterizes Luke's account is small, trivial details. They come from people who are simply describing things like they remember it. Luke is recounting this story from either Zechariah or someone who heard Zechariah tell it.

<sup>12</sup> And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah..."

- I love little scenes like this where it shows you what angels are really like.
- 70% of Americans say they believe in angels, and 32% say they have experienced one.
  - The common picture of angel-sightings is pretty tame. **My kids' books** usually have them something like little fat Pillsbury doughboys with wings.
  - *Life* magazine a few years ago did this big survey to find out what the 32% who saw an angel said it was like... the answers range from spooky to bizarre:
    - You've got of course, the standard messages from the underworld;
    - but then you've got people who claim angels show up to give them directions when they're lost;
    - several who say that angels helped them find a parking space—which, if that's true, that would have to be the worst job for an angel—"oh, come on! Parking for Joel Osteen again?";

- One lady in the article claims an angel helped her make a chicken casserole;
- ...and another lady who said an angel helped her lose weight—she even wrote a book about it, called, *The Angel's Little Diet Book*.

- I won't comment on whether those things are true (probably not), but just know this... when someone sees an angel in the Bible, the response is always to be absolutely terrified. The angel's 1<sup>st</sup> response is usually, "No, no, it's ok... DON'T DIE." It's not usually, "I think you need a dash of cumin in that casserole."

<sup>13</sup> Your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. <sup>14</sup> And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. <sup>16</sup> And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, <sup>17</sup> and he will 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 for the Lord a people prepared."

- They are going to give birth to a son who will be a great prophet. He's going to call lead in a national repentance, and prepare the way for an even greater child, the Messiah.

<sup>18</sup> And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

- I love his phrasing here. He says he's "old," but his wife is "advanced in years." In Hebrew "advanced in years" is a much stronger phrase than simply "old."
  - Zach is like, "I'm old... but my wife is *old*."
  - *Her birth certificate says "expired" on it. When she sneezes dust comes out. If you told her to act her age, she'd die.*
  - She's old. Folks, when the Bible says your old, you're old. She's not fertile Myrtle anymore.

- So Zechariah says, “I don’t believe you.” You have to hear the tone in his words. “I don’t believe you. I don’t believe you because year after year we prayed and asked God for this and there was no answer. And now, you’re telling me that when I’m old and about to die that me and my geriatric wife are going to have a baby?” Where were you in my 30’s? 40’s?

<sup>19</sup> And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. (that’s a bad phrase... that’s the “I’m Jason Bourne” statement x 10) I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

- The angel was like, “Really... Zechariah?” Just a minute ago you were in the corner wetting your pants, and now you’re all like, “Are you sure this can happen?”
- So...

<sup>20</sup> Behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.”

- This was the 1<sup>st</sup> massive time-out in the Bible.
- The angel is like, “Go to your room; no TV; no cell phones. I just want you to think about what you’ve done.”
- For 9 months he can’t hear, or speak.
  - Now, real quick, you might say, “I can see where it says he’ll be mute, but where’s it say he’ll be deaf, too?” Jump down to vs. 62: when people spoke to him, they made signs... You don’t make signs for people who can hear, correct? I mean, if you do, it’s insulting. “DO YOU WANT TO EAT?” “I can hear. Are you kidding me?”
  - So, he has to sit in timeout for 9 months and think about how dumb he is (no pun intended)
- Now, before you just write Zechariah off as a stubborn old fool, I want you to relate to him...
  - Zechariah has a deep wound. The angel did not simply show up and say, “Tomorrow it’s going to rain, Zechariah.” “Nun-uhh.”

- The angel speaks about hope in an area where Zechariah and his wife have only experienced pain and disappointment.
- Zechariah’s refusal to believe arises out of past hurt. Zechariah has a heart full of doubt that God is capable or able because of bitterness over the past. Zechariah thinks his bitter past trump the promises and power of the sovereign God.
- You ever do that?
  - “God, you’re not in control.” I know what your word says, but how could you be in control and the situation be the way it is...?
  - “God, you’ve forgotten about me.”
  - “God, there’s no way You could have a plan of goodness and blessing for me, because I’ve done this and this and this in my past.”
  - “God, I just don’t have the capability to do what I feel like you’re telling me to do.”
  - “God, this has been a habit and problem for so long and there’s no way I can shake it. I know you’ll say we’ll be more than conquerors and that we can do all things through Christ... but I give up.”

God shut up Zechariah in timeout to teach Him to trust His love and His character. What God did to Zechariah was discipline, yes... but it was *love*.

There is a difference between discipline and punishment. This is really important: In punishment God is paying you back for your sin.

**Discipline is when God gets out a surgical knife and corrects things in you for your good.**

- Would I want a man with a knife sticking it in my chest? Depends on what his intentions are. If he’s trying to murder me, no. But if he’s a doctor who is performing open-heart surgery with a scalpel trying to save my life, then, yes. For

believers in Jesus, God doesn't punish them for their sin. Why? Because Jesus took every ounce the penalty for it. God doesn't punish you for your sin, because God punished Jesus for your sin, and if God punished Jesus for your sin, He can't punish you because that would be taking two punishments for the same sin and that's unjust and God is just.

- So now, when He works on you, He does so w/o the slightest hint of retribution; he does w/ the scalpel of healing and not the knife of judgment.
- **Jesus got the knife of God's judgment so I could get the scalpel of healing.**
- You feel like God is paying you back; He is not. He paid Jesus back every ounce of retribution so not a drop remains for you.

<sup>24</sup> After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden,

- If I were 75 and I was pregnant, I think I would keep myself hidden, too: You know how when a woman get pregnant during those 1<sup>st</sup> few months they are nervous b/c people can't tell if they're pregnant or just gaining a little weight? When you're 75, *no one* assumes you are pregnant. "Whoa... someone's been going back for extra portions at the Bob Evans' buffet."

In these 5 months, Elisabeth said, (... saying,) <sup>25</sup> "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

- That word "reproach," is really important; we'll come back to that.
- That's what Elisabeth said during her pregnancy. What Zechariah said was, of course, nothing.

**Jump down to vs. 57:** <sup>57</sup> Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. <sup>58</sup> And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. <sup>59</sup> And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And

they would have called him Zechariah after his father, <sup>60</sup> but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." <sup>61</sup> And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." <sup>62</sup> And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. <sup>63</sup> And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John."

- It looks like our boy's learned some things in these 9 months. He didn't say, "But I like John. John's a strong name." He says, "His name is John! Hurry before God kills me."

And they all wondered. <sup>64</sup> And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.

- Pent up worship explodes out of Zechariah's mouth. For 9 months he has sat there and watched in silence... all the while getting excited, and learning to believe the Gospel.
- When John is born, this old man sings and dances and spins around and starts freestyle rapping... you can read his rhyme in vv 68-79

The purpose of God's discipline in your life is that you overflow with joy and happiness in God in a way that makes you burst out in praise.

- Some of you have been disciplined are being disciplined. He's doing it in love. He wants you to learn to love and trust Him. I know it feels painful, and like He's trying to kill you, but His intentions are your healing, not your destruction.
- The older I get, the more I believe in this. God's love and tenderness is seen in his discipline of us. The wrath of God is when God does nothing about your sin, when He allows you to keep walking in it. The love of God pours itself out in your life when God says "No! No more! I'm not going to let you harden your heart against me any longer; I'm not going to let you be consumed with selfishness; I'm not going to let you give your heart to idolatry and experiences the anxiety, loneliness and despair that results from walking apart from me." So, I'm going to put you through surgery, and surgery HURTS, but I do it because I care about you."

- I was talking this through with our campus pastors, and one of them, Andrew Hopper, who played football in college, said, “Yeah, you know, this is like when I played football. If the coach is on you, it’s because he sees potential. If the coach never gets on you, it’s because he sees no potential; he doesn’t care. **So his discipline of you is proof of his care about you.**” When he said that another of our campus pastors, Danny Franks, said: “That explains so much in my athletic career.... ‘How am I doing coach?’ ‘You’re doing fine, Franks. Is that your name?’ ‘What do I do on the next play, coach?’ ‘Uhh... go long, again. Go long. Just run out there and stand.”
- Discipline is not God taking your joy away, it’s God taking from you the things that ultimately will kill you. You need to pay attention!
  - In C. S. Lewis book *The Silver Chair*, volume 6 in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, there is a character called Puddleglum who is a Marshwiggle. Well, at one point the characters in the story are seduced by the witch and she burns this magic fire that causes them to fall under a spell, to forget why they are there, where they came from... well, Puddleglum, at the last minute, comes to the fire and stamps it out with his foot... he burns himself really badly in the process, but **C.S. Lewis** says, as the characters smell the burning flesh of Puddleglum’s foot, they began to awake out of their enchantment, because, **“there is nothing enchanting about the smell of burnt Marshwiggle.”** God sometimes burns you to wake you up.
  - *Burning flesh wakes you up from the enchantment from sin.*
- Some of you are already there... you’re under the witch’s spell, your flesh is burning... wake up!
- Others of you... you don’t have to wait for your flesh to burn. You could just believe God from the beginning. You could just

believe the word of God preached to you. That’s why some of you are here. Take it from one with experience; it makes for a much less painful life.

You see, tucked in the middle of this story is another story (we jumped from vv 26 to 57)... about another angel who appeared to another person with a message of an unexpected and in many ways even more unbelievable pregnancy. This person’s name was Mary:

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary.

The angel appears to her, and, of course, she’s terrified like I told you, so the angel says: <sup>30</sup> “Do not be afraid, Mary... behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David... and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Now, watch this: <sup>34</sup> And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” That sounds like Zechariah’s question, doesn’t it? The words are the same, but the heart behind them is different. Zechariah’s question was asked in scorn and disbelief; Mary’s question was asked in wonder and amazement.

<sup>35</sup> And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age...

- Seriously, can the Bible never mention that woman's name without throwing out how old she is? I mean

even now, you think she's in heaven going, "Every time? Please... just one time, could I be somebody besides just 'the old chic'?"

Elisabeth... has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.<sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God."

Nothing is impossible. No natural inability keeps you from fulfilling God's promises. No sin is too great that it puts you beyond the reach of God's grace. No mistake in your past disqualifies you from God's good plans for you in the future.

<sup>38</sup> And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; **let it be to me according to your word.**" There is your phrase to live by. "Let it be to me according to your word." That's not a "grit your teeth and surrender" phrase... but "dare I rearrange my life and my outlook in light of how good God's promises are to me?"

What if you did that? Psalm 23:6; Isaiah 26:2; Jer 29:11-13; Romans 8:1 (no condemnation; every thought only good); Eph 1:9 every molecule of the universe harnessed for God's good purpose in you, so that Romans 8:28.

Mary believed and said "Bring that stuff on me, God!" **And the angel departed from her.** And Mary could still talk.

When it comes to faith, it's only pass/fail. Very important. PLANE ILLUSTRATION. Zechariah is a priest; he failed. Mary a teenager.

Zech failed; Mary passed. Both of them had supernatural babies; but Mary got to talk to people about how awesome it was sooner than Zechariah did.

What I want from you, in a nutshell: I want you to learn to trust the goodness of God.

- That is the key to doing anything for God. It's what will **(1)** you give you the ability to surrender to Him, **(2)** to trust Him with your problems, and **(3)** to pray bold, audacious things for your marriage and family and your coworkers.
- Yes, God, it sounds impossible to me... and it sounds like it may even cause me some problems—being pregnant and all with no husband... "I trust you; you are good; there is nothing better than what you would declare over me, and nothing I'd rather have than your intentions for me."
- Oh, what I wish for you is that I could convince you of the love of God... That even when he breaks your bones and shuts you up in silence it because he desires your salvation, not your destruction. I wish you'd realize the love of God flows over you right now like a Father gushes over a child, and that you would just resign yourself completely to Him; to cast yourself fully upon Him.
- **Listen: the love of God is the most amazing, humbling force in the universe. Not the wrath of God, but the love of God.**

Let me close by explaining this: there is a meaning here beyond just that God can give children to people who sometimes think there's no more chance.

- You see, barrenness was a sign of ultimate desolation in Jewish culture. Children were their primary source of joy and security. Children meant you had prospects for the future; in those days they didn't have 401K's; your kids are who took care of you. No kids meant no real honor; no one to take care of you in your old age.
- Your issue may not be children. Maybe something else in life has let you down. Your career never turned out like you'd hoped. You've never gotten the success you thought you deserved. You're still single and always wanted to be married. Or, you're

married and you feel like your marriage has let you down. Your sick and can't enjoy health.

- There are many ways to be barren.
  - Maybe you feel barren because you have less talent, or didn't get into the right school, and now your soul feels like it's empty with no hope for the future.
- The point is not that God will give you that thing...
  - ...in fact, in many ways, Zechariah never got the enjoyment out of the thing he hoped for. He probably died when John was a boy... never got to see him grow up, see his grandkids; John the Baptist probably never took care of him in old age.
  - The point is not that the birth of John the Baptist took away their soul's barrenness; no, there was another baby who was in the process of being born to somebody else who would do that.
- This story is part of the birth narrative of the Messiah. Ultimately, you see, He, Jesus, was the answer to our soul's barrenness.
- The reason our hearts are not happy is not because we don't have children or romance or money or success; it's because we are separated from God.
- Jesus' primary mission was to restore us to God. And that's what takes away our barrenness. The Messiah that was to be born to Mary would take away our sin and condemnation by dying for it in our place and removing our separation from God. He would make it so we knew God again, and God is such a treasure, that when you have Him, you can deal with the disappointment of childlessness or poor health or singleness when you don't want it.
- It's not that He doesn't *also* often give good gifts like children or success or marriage; just that the BEST gift He gives, the one that takes away sadness and despair and fills your life with true joy and real security is not any of those things; the best gift is God Himself.
- The Prosperity Gospel is right in that it recognizes God wants to give you good things. It is wrong in what it defines the best things

to be. The best gifts God gives are not BMW's or houses or even marriage or children, but Himself; His presence.

- Don't confuse God's lesser gifts with His ultimate ones.
  - Sometimes God gives you a "kiss" in a good gift. My wife, my children, all the blessings... but those are just signs of His favor. The real gift, the ultimate blessing and answer to my barrenness, was the gift of Himself purchased for me by Christ.
  - So, enjoy the signs of God's gift, but find your refuge in God Himself.
- Where do you feel barren? There will always be something (me: I tried to overcome the feeling of barrenness in my life with success—and it has worked sometimes... experience success and feel good for a while, but there is always someone more successful, something I didn't get that I feel like I deserved or needed)

**Conclusion: I've heard it said like this: All of us, eventually, face some disappointment in life. When that happens, you'll do 1 of 4 things (via Tim Keller)**

#### **(4 Reactions to Disappointment)**

1. **Blame the thing itself**... it let you down; you need something else.
  - Things with your 1<sup>st</sup> boyfriend didn't work, so what do you do? You trade him in for a new one. And the guy says, "Me and you baby got something special. We'll make it forever." He's lying. He'll disappoint you like the 1<sup>st</sup> guy did.
  - Your marriage didn't make you happy, so you get a new one, or an affair, or maybe even the idea of marriage altogether and bury yourself in your work thinking that making money is where it is. Or you emotionally marry one of your children.
  - Your job disappoints you so you blame it, get depressed, and find salvation in the thrill of drugs or beer.
  - Life disappoints you so you make an idol out of your family. You're really obsessive and possessive and always complaining that your children are letting you down.



2. **Blame yourself:** You think something is wrong with you. The problem is you are a loser and a failure and that's why you're miserable. People who live this way develop guilt complexes and become depressed. They think, "Something's wrong with me. I can't do anything right. I am unlovable."
3. **Blame the world:** Life is a tale told by idiots; there's no real happiness in the world; become cynical and teach at our local universities. There are a lot of bitter, sad, older people in the world.
4. **Realize you were created for another world.** For God. And when you realize that, the birth of a baby who would bear your sin and judgment and the things that separated you from God and who had the ability to reconcile you to God becomes very, very relevant.
  - People always say, "I want a pastor who gives me things relevant to my life... want they want are 4 steps to good communication in a marriage mixed in with some humorous anecdotes. Because your soul was created for God there is nothing on earth more relevant than the birth of Jesus, and learning 5 steps to good communication will not do nearly as much for your deep soul needs as embracing the billion steps he took toward you in Christ.

And so this Messiah's birth is not just a religious event in history, it's the answer to your whole life's struggle. It, and it alone, takes away your soul's barrenness.

Do you know Him? Repentance and faith. Let us talk to you.

# Bullpen:

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## DOUBT IS A FOOT POISED

- Life had not turned out like you had hoped.
  - How different life had turned out for Zechariah thought it was going to. Zechariah, a young man, thinks he's going to have many sons, he's been faithful to God, he thinks he's going to have this big brood of kids, but it goes different! He goes decades and decades and decades without children.
  - He finally gets children, children that he's not going to get to see grow up.
- The meaning for you: There are many ways to be barren. Success; health; marriage... the coming of the Messiah takes all those away.
  - Sometimes he gives you a kiss; a sign of those things. Jesus. Barrenness is cursed. Jesus took the curse. You can pray for them; when you depend on them to take your approach and your soul barrenness, they have become idols. God is what we need.
- We all have sorrow. Is God working in your sorrow, and transforming your sorrow, into something?
- For others, your sorrow is the beginning of judgment.
- For those in Jesus, this world is as close to hell as you'll ever get; for those outside of Jesus, this is as close to heaven you'll ever get. These are the last good things!

Luke is the Gospel of the Spirit. John was the servant of the Spirit<sup>1</sup>

- their faithfulness did not guarantee all the earthly blessings. (earthly blessings are signs of God's favor, but not the essence of it).
  - A kiss from heaven.
  - Prosperity Gospel is good in that ... recognizes good things come from God. Fails in recognizing what is truly good... which is God Himself.
- Me seeing an angel in the green room
  -

Others claim that angels help them find parking spaces.

- Good news? How many of you ladies in your 70's would take the announcement that your pregnant as good news. It might be if you had wanted to have children and could not.

He did not choose Herod, but went for a righteous, humble, old priest who had lived with great disappointment

- Real quick... let me point this out, b/c it will be important later, but one thing that characterizes Luke's account is a great attention to detail... You see one here.
- This all happened in the days of Herod. By the way, this helps us know exactly when Jesus was born... We know now from history that this Herod reigned from 39 BC to 4 BC. That means that Jesus was born somewhere around 4 BC... which probably seems to some of you a little weird, that Christ was born 4 years... before Christ... but that's just due to errors the Gregorians made when they established a 0 year for their calendar in 1582.

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Butler, T. C. (2000). *Vol. 3: Luke*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (9). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

-The surprise of seeing the angel

-2 kinds of faith: Mary's vs. Zech's question and the 2 responses by God

-Elizabeth saw her shame as taken away by pregnancy with John. Many women did not their shame taken away by pregnancy, but all did by the Messiah she was helping to bring forth.

Correlation to Psalm 51... Zechariah is shut up in silence (deaf and mute) while God rebuked him... God "broke his bones" (Ps 51)