

LifeGroup Sermon Series Study
2022-2023
Series Three



“42”



It's that time of year again. The Christmas lights are being put up, the gifts are being bought, and a good number of you are praying for snow on Christmas. But there are other experiences that many of you look forward to like the Christmas carols, the Children's Christmas program, the Ladies Christmas party, Christmas Eve Service and reflecting on the Christmas story.

In preparation for the Christmas season and our Christmas series, I was intrigued by the events leading up to the birth of Christ. Specifically, the 42 weeks leading up to Mary's return back to Bethlehem. This was a time that began with a priest by the name of Zechariah, his barren wife Elizabeth, and their supernatural experiences. Zechariah was visited by an angel to tell him that his elderly wife was going to be with child. He didn't believe it and the angel took his speech away. Six months later that same angel appeared to Mary, a virgin, to tell her some ridiculous news but her reaction was different.

I can relate to the doubt that Zechariah felt. I can also relate to the fear Elizabeth experienced with being pregnant so late in life. I am amazed and can only hope that I would respond the way that Mary responded to her news. But what I find interesting was how God prepared, planned, and equipped these two women to accomplish something truly unbelievable. Their faithfulness and obedience are a great example of living faithfully for God. Zechariah's great comeback, after being punished for his lack of faith, is equally inspiring in that God gives us second chances when we blow it.

I think Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary are a lot like us. Yes, we have our doubts, our fears, our desire to escape, but we also have inside of us the Holy Spirit to help us to live faithful, obedient, and holy lives. These three people showed us how to do it during those 42 weeks.

Pastor Doug

“42”

Event #1 – Zechariah and the Angel

Luke 1:1-25

Lesson 1

I. Purpose:

- A. To help us understand what happened right before those 42 weeks that Zechariah was mute.
- B. To help us know what happened to Zechariah.
- C. To help us see how God used Zechariah to prepare for the Messiah’s coming.

II. Community that Cares:

- A. What is your next step and how are you doing with taking that step?

- B. How are you doing with your 5-5-5 this week?

III. Community that Understands the Background:

Luke begins the prequel of Jesus coming to the earth by sharing that Herod was the king of Judea. Herod was remembered as a builder of cities and the one who rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem in extravagant style, but he also destroyed people. He was ruthless in his rule of his territory.

Zechariah was a priest at the time. He and his wife, Elizabeth, were known for their personal holiness. God used Zechariah to set in motion his plan for the Messiah to come to the earth as a baby. They were both appropriate people for God to use in this way. Both Zechariah and Elizabeth shared the pain of not having children. This was considered in Jewish culture to be a sign of not having God’s blessing.

Zechariah was chosen by Lot to enter the Holy Place to offer incense to God for the people. Suddenly, an angel appeared and Zechariah was afraid. The angel’s reassurance calmed Zechariah but the angel’s message was too good to be true. God had heard their prayers and Elizabeth was going to

Lesson 1 cont.

have a baby. His circumstances drowned out the message from God and he couldn't believe. As a result, Zechariah lost his speech until the promise was fulfilled. The first of many miracles to come as the Messiah was speeding towards earth.

IV. **Community that Learns:**

- A. Review the points of the Pastor's message. What spoke to you, challenged you, or encouraged you in these points?
- B. Sermon outline: Event #1 – Zechariah and the Angel (Luke 1:1-25).
- C. Three observations of Zechariah and the Angel:
 1. An Angel appears (_____) and announces that Elizabeth would finally have a baby.
 2. Zechariah's disbelief causes his (_____).
 3. Elizabeth becomes pregnant and stays in (_____) for five months.

V. **Community that Applies:**

- A. Have you or have you known someone who has ever had an angel appear to them? What was that experience like?
- B. Why was it so hard for Zechariah to believe that he was going to be a father?
- C. Why do you think that the angel made Zechariah unable to speak? Does that seem a little harsh to you?

Lesson 1 cont.

- D. Do you think Zechariah was surprised when Elizabeth became pregnant? What about Elizabeth?

- E. Why do you think Elizabeth stayed in seclusion for five months?

- F. What part did this experience have on the overall story of Jesus coming to the earth as a baby?

- G. What does this story teach you about God and you?

VI. **Community that is Accountable:**

Is there something you need to start or stop doing because of what you learned about the interaction between Zechariah and Gabriel?

VII. **Community that Prays:**

Spend a few minutes praying about your next step.

VIII. **Community that Looks Ahead:**

- A. The scriptures next week are Luke 1:26-38.
- B. If you missed Sunday's sermon, watch online at www.lifewatercc.org before the next Life Group.
- C. Reflect on next week's questions during your five minutes of daily silence.

Notes: _____

“42”

Event #2 – Mary and the Angel

Luke 1:26-38

Lesson 2

I. Purpose:

- A. To help us understand what happened right before those 42 weeks that Zechariah was mute.
- B. To help us know how Mary responded to the Angel.
- C. To help us see how God used Mary to prepare for the Messiah.

II. A community that Cares:

- A. What is your next step and how are you doing with taking that step?
- B. How are you doing with your 5-5-5 this week?

III. Community that Understands the Background:

Luke tells us that Elizabeth was in her sixth month when God sends the same angel to Mary that He sent to Elizabeth. It is interesting how Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, connected Elizabeth's pregnancy with Mary's miracle. Elizabeth was in Jerusalem and Mary was in Nazareth. Nazareth was a lot different than Jerusalem. It was a long way from Jerusalem. Located on a major trade route, Nazareth was visited frequently by Gentile merchants and Roman soldiers. It was known for its independent and cold attitude.

Mary was a young, poor female. All her circumstances would point to the idea that God could not use her for His great purposes. She was greeted by the Angel with a reinforcement of her faithfulness and commitment to God. From the outside, Mary would seem to be the last person that God could use but God had other ideas. He was going to ask something of her that would cost her a lot. The commitment that would be required would demand everything of her. But God chose her for this important role in

Lesson 2 cont.

the coming of the Messiah.

Mary's response to the Angel was much different than Zechariah's. She was not afraid of the Angel, but she was troubled by his words. She asked her questions and believed, whereas Zechariah did not believe. Mary's response to the Angel's words were "May it be to me as you have said" where Zechariah's voice was taken from him for a time. Mary had complete faith in God and knew that He was in control of everything that was going to happen. To reinforce that thought, the Angel told Mary that her relative Elizabeth was going to have a baby in her old age. Everything was working together just as God had planned.

IV. Community that Learns:

- A. Review the points of the Pastor's message. What spoke to you, challenged you, or encouraged you in these points?

- B. Sermon outline: Event #2 – Mary and the Angel (Luke 1:26-38)

- C. Four observations of Mary and the Angel:
 1. God (_____) the same Angel to go to a virgin named Mary.

 2. Mary was (_____) by the Angel's greeting.

 3. The Angel (_____) that she would give birth to the Son of the Most High.

 4. Mary is _____ but after the Angel's explanation she agrees.

Lesson 2 cont.

V. **Community that Applies:**

- A. Have you ever noticed before that the Angel that spoke to Zechariah and Mary was the same Angel?
- B. Do you think that is significant? Why or why not?
- C. How would you react today if an Angel appeared to you?
- D. Why was Mary not fearful of the Angel but was troubled by his words?
- E. What do you find the most interesting about the Angel's message?
- F. What do you find the most interesting about Mary's reaction to the Angel's explanation?
- G. What impact do you think the news that Elizabeth was pregnant had on Mary?
- H. What part did this experience have on the overall story of Jesus coming to the earth as a baby?
- I. What does this story teach you about God and you?

VI. **Community that is Accountable:**

Is there something you need to start or stop doing because of what you learned about the interaction between Mary and Gabriel?

“42”

Event #3 – Elizabeth and Mary
Luke 1:39-56
Lesson 3

I. Purpose:

- A. To help us understand what happened right before those 42 weeks that Zechariah was mute.
- B. To help us know what happened in that time that Mary spent with Elizabeth.
- C. To help us see how God was glorified by both these women through their supernatural experiences.

II. Community that Cares:

- A. What is your next step and how are you doing with taking that step?
- B. How are you doing with your 5-5-5 this week?

III. Community that Understands the Background:

Both Mary and Elizabeth had experienced some pretty incredible supernatural experiences. Elizabeth’s husband was visited by an angel and then became mute because of his unbelief. Mary had the same angel visit her and shared God’s plan that she would be the mother of the Messiah. You can imagine the anxiety both these women were experiencing. Elizabeth was well along in years and was pregnant for the first time. Mary was not married, and she was pregnant in an impossible way. Who would believe her?

When these two women came together, more supernatural sparks took place. When Elizabeth sees Mary enter their home and hears Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s baby leaps for joy. That baby was John the Baptist and even this young infant in Elizabeth’s womb could sense that he was in God’s presence. He jumped for joy in her womb. Elizabeth received

Lesson 3 cont.

a special filling of the Holy Spirit and prophesied. Then Mary spoke what has been described as the most beautiful song ever spoken. Both women gave such amazing glory to God for their current situation.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. I am sure there were many times of laughing, crying, and praising God. He was truly going to do something amazing. This was exactly what Mary needed because what was ahead of her was not going to be easy. Her life would forever be changed. As she packed up to leave, I can imagine her apprehension and concern but at the same time hope and joy that was unexplainable. After being on the mountain top, she returned to reality to face what was coming as she returned home.

IV. Community that Learns:

- A. Review the points of the Pastor's message. What spoke to you, challenged you, or encouraged you in these points?
- B. Sermon outline: Event #3 – Mary and Elizabeth (Luke 1:38-56)
- C. Four observations of Mary and Elizabeth's time together:
 1. Mary at that time (_____) to see Elizabeth.
 2. When Elizabeth (_____) Mary her baby leapt for joy in her womb.
 3. Both May and Elizabeth (_____) and worship the Lord.
 4. Mary (_____) home after three months.

Lesson 3 cont.

V. **Community that Applies:**

- A. If you were Mary traveling to Elizabeth, what would have been some of your thoughts?
- B. Do you think Elizabeth knew that Mary was pregnant before she came to visit her?
- C. Why do you think it was so important to Mary to go see Elizabeth?
- D. How did Mary and Elizabeth encourage each other?
- E. When one of them began to express concern or anxiety about what was coming, what do you think the other one did?
- F. How did they keep their focus on praising God at this time?
- G. Do you have friends that can remind you of what God is doing in your life? Is that important?
- H. Why is it important to worship while you are in a crisis?

VI. **Community that is Accountable:**

Is there something you need to start or stop doing because of what you learned about Mary and Elizabeth's experience?

VII. **Community that Prays:**

Spend a few minutes praying about your next step.

“42”

**Event #4 – Zechariah and Elizabeth
Luke 1:57-80
Lesson 4**

I. Purpose:

- A. To help us understand what happened right before Jesus was born as a baby on the earth.
- B. To help us know how Zechariah and Elizabeth were faithful to God’s instruction.
- C. To help us see how God speaks and tells Zechariah what John would become.

II. Community that Cares:

- A. What is your next step and how are you doing with taking that step?
- B. How are you doing with your 5-5-5 this week?

III. Community that Understands the Background:

Elizabeth has a successful delivery. Mom and child are doing well. God had been with her and showed His mercy to her. Even her friends and neighbors heard about God’s mercy towards her. What a relief. There was so much joy around Zechariah and Elizabeth’s home. God had truly answered their prayers.

But their community was about to see another miracle involving this boy, John the Baptist. On the 8th day, Zechariah and Elizabeth went to circumcise the child as was the custom. It was also common to name the baby after the circumcision. Their relatives were going to name the baby after Zechariah, which was natural and logical for the first-born son. Elizabeth objected and said, “He is to be called John”. The people protested because no one had the name John in their family. It didn’t seem correct or appropriate. Then they asked Zechariah what he thought, and he wrote down, “His name is John”, which shocked everyone.

Lesson 4 cont.

Immediately, Zechariah's mouth was opened and he could speak again. He also was filled with the Holy Spirit for this special moment and prophesied. He praised God first and then he told the people what John would do and who he would become. He also prophesied that the coming Messiah would redeem the world. What an exciting time.

IV. **Community that Learns:**

- A. Review the points of the Pastor's message. What spoke to you, challenged you, or encouraged you in these points?

- B. Sermon outline: Event #4 – Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:57-80)

- C. Three observations after the birth of John:
 1. After the baby was born, opinions about the baby's name were (_____).

 2. Zechariah regains his (_____).

 3. Zechariah prophesies what will happen to his (_____).

V. **Community that Applies:**

- A. In what ways do you think God showed Elizabeth great mercy?

- B. How has God showed you great mercy recently?

- C. Why do you think God waited to heal Zechariah of being mute at John's circumcision?

Lesson 4 cont.

- D. How has God done the impossible for you in the midst of your obedience?

- E. Is it significant that the first thing Zechariah does after being filled with the Holy Spirit is praise God?

- F. How did Zechariah's prophesy fill in a lot of the gaps for what was coming?

VI. **Community that is Accountable:**

Is there something you need to start or stop doing because of what you learned about Zechariah and Elizabeth's experience?

VII. **Community that Prays:**

Spend a few minutes praying about your next step.

VIII. **Community that Looks Ahead:**

- A. The scriptures next week are Mark 6:6b
- B. If you missed Sunday's sermon, watch online at www.lifewatercc.org before the next Life Group.
- C. Reflect on next week's questions during your five minutes of daily silence.

Notes: _____

Fill in the Blanks

Lesson 1

- 1 - suddenly
- 2 - silence
- 3 - seclusion

Lesson 2

- 1 - commissioned
- 2 - concerned
- 3 - communicated
- 4 - confused

Lesson 3

- 1 - rushed
- 2 - received
- 3 - rejoice
- 4 - returns

Lesson 4

- 1 - shared
- 2 - speech
- 3 - son

Prayer Requests

DATE	PRAYER REQUEST	ANSWER

Prayer Requests

DATE	PRAYER REQUEST	ANSWER

Prayer Requests

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