



THE SONGS OF CHRISTMAS

INTRO: This week we're looking at Zechariah's prophetic song that follows the birth of his son, John the baptizer. Once again, Luke shows us that the Good News arrives in surprising ways, disrupting our lives for the better. Earlier in Luke 1:5–25, we learn that Zechariah is a priest whose vocation involves a lot of talking. On any given day, he can be found leading prayers at the temple or teaching others about God's commandments. Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth have been unable to have children for many years until the day an angel visits Zechariah, declaring that they'll finally become parents. But that's not all—their son John will play a critical role in God's redemptive story for humanity! Even as a faithful priest, Zechariah is so shocked that he doubts the angel's message and can't speak for months because of his unbelief. When the birth of his son restores his speech, Zechariah bursts into song. He's had plenty of time to reflect on God's faithfulness. God doesn't just make promises; he fulfills them in the most imaginative ways.

1. When have you received news that was too good to be true? How did you respond?

READ Luke 1:67–80

1. What words or images repeat themselves? How do they give you hope?
2. In verses 76–79, Zechariah describes John's calling. Do you think this is your calling, too? Why/why not?
3. How does Mary's response to the angel's news (Luke 1:26–38) differ from Zechariah's (Luke 1:11–23)?

SERMON QUESTIONS:

1. Describe a time when you felt discouraged and gave up hope. How did you move through this season?
2. There are a lot of promises in Zechariah's song about being freed from our enemies, including fear. Who are Zechariah's enemies, and what are his fears? What enemies or fears do you currently have?
3. When have you experienced God's grace and intervention in your life? Or are you still waiting?

OUTRO: Zechariah's story teaches us that God calls us to be messengers of his hope and redemption no matter the situation we find ourselves in. Depending on what we're going through, this can feel like a big ask. Yet it's also our greatest gift and calling—"to give light to those who sit in darkness" (verse 79). The lives of Zechariah and John the baptizer remind us that "our vocation as followers of the Lord will not be a path of success and luxury, but one of continual crying out in the wildernesses, a life given to guide others into the way of peace."¹

PRAY TOGETHER.

(Pray that the light of God's hope will pierce the darkness of a discouraging situation.)

¹ Whaley, Andrew Clark. "Luke 1:57–80" in *Feasting on the Gospels: Luke, Vol. 1*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014. Page 30.