

'Finding your voice'

Lessons for the lead in to Christmas

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has come to His people and redeemed them ..." (Luke 1.68)

Luke begins his account of the life and ministry of Jesus with an extended narrative leading up to His birth. The 'prequel' to the birth of Jesus is Luke's record of an elderly couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, with whom the Lord has remarkable dealings.

The threads of their story are carefully woven into the narrative of the birth of the Lord Jesus Himself and provide important lessons for ourselves, which we'll consider over the weeks of Advent.

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1. Life on mute

".. now you will be silent .."

Luke 1.5-22

The good news, according to Luke, begins with an elderly couple: a priest who'll become mute and whose wife will get pregnant. Strange things were happening: God's promised blessing to Abram (Gen.12.1ff) was coming, at last, to fruition.

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1. Read Luke 1.5-22. At the high point in his priestly career this elderly man gets the shock of his life; and for months on end his life is put on 'mute'.

Why do you think Luke starts his narrative of the life and ministry of Jesus with the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth?

How would you summarise the main message of this passage in a single sentence?

2. Read Luke 1.5-10. Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, are introduced: the man is a priest and is given the once-in-a-lifetime privilege of entering the nearer presence of the Lord.

What details about this couple does Luke give?

Which details are you most struck by, and why??

3. Read Luke 1.11-17. An angel assures Zechariah that his prayer (a 'priestly' prayer for the Lord to come in renewing power? Or a 'personal' prayer for a child?) has been heard.

What did the angel say would be the chief characteristics of the child who would be born?

In what ways is the birth of this child significant in relation to the birth of Jesus?

4. Read Luke 1.18-22. Zechariah's response to the staggering promise of the angel is perhaps understandable – but it was expressive of a lack of faith and dealt with as such.

Why was Zechariah muted? Do think that was harsh on the part of the Lord through His angel?

What do you think the Lord intended to effect through Zechariah's being unable to speak?

What do you think the Lord may intend to effect through our being 'muted' meanwhile in terms of our praise?