

'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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3. Change

".. 'No! He is to be called John' .."

Luke 1.57-66

The experience of God's grace lies at the heart of the gospel: it brings about radical change in our lives – and it necessitates, too, significant change in the way our lives are lived.

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1. **Read Luke 1.57-66.** A barren woman gives birth to a child: a mute priest starts to speak: and an old tradition goes out of the window. In the words of the song – the times they are a-changin'!

What changes have you had to embrace over these past months and how easy or otherwise have you found that?

How would you summarise the main thrust of these verses?

2. Read Luke 1.57-58. In the essentially communal society of Israel, the birth of Elizabeth's son was an event in which the whole community had more than a passing interest.

What's meant by the observation that the birth of this child was regarded as a 'great mercy' shown to Elizabeth?

Read **Luke 1.14, 2.10 & 24.52**: are you a 'joyful' person? In what ways can you see in your own life that the gospel has brought you joy?

3. Read Luke 1.59-63. Attention is drawn by Luke to the key issue of the baby's name: the name 'John' means simply, 'the Lord is gracious'; it's that theme which permeates the whole gospel.

How does Luke draw his readers' attention to the name given to Elizabeth and Zechariah's son?

What clues did the angel give to Zechariah (1.13-17) as to why the child was to be given this name?

What does this teach you about the Lord's grace to you?

4. Read Luke 1.64-66. As Zechariah names the baby in line with God's word to him, and in so doing affirms the reality of the Lord's grace, his speech is restored.

What would have been '*all these things*' which people were talking about?

What encouragement do you take from these verses/this passage? And what has challenged you? Are there steps of obedience to God's word you've been challenged to take?