

Zechariah had received the gift of a fulfilled promise...yet he saw that it pointed to an even bigger promise. Salvation, God's light breaking through, and he path to true peace

3. Peace Chaser, Peacekeeper, Peace Maker

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6 NIV

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. - Matthew 5:9 NIV

In the second week of Advent our focus is on Peace. Isaiah tells us the name of the child born unto us is Prince of Peace.

How would you describe the image you have of being at peace?

Some of us define peace as the absence of conflict. Many of us equate peace with a feeling. But we see in Isaiah our Peace comes from Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Peace in Hebrew is shalom and means wholeness. When we are whole, we are at peace. If we chase after the feeling, we will never be satisfied, and keeping conflict and chaos in check is temporary at best. Matthew tells us that peacemakers are children of God. The only true peace we can offer is through Jesus whose sacrifice made a way for us to be at peace with God.

WRAP-UP

The opening chapters of Luke begin not with Mary and Joseph but with Zechariah and Elizabeth, a faithful yet childless couple who receive an astonishing promise from the angel Gabriel that they will bear a son—John the Baptist—six months before Jesus' conception. Zechariah doubts and is rendered mute until the child's birth, while Elizabeth responds with praise as God quietly works in their waiting. Their story highlights how God moves even in silence, shaping trust and obedience over time. When John is finally born, Zechariah's restored voice bursts into prophecy, recognizing not only the fulfillment of God's promise to them but also the larger salvation arriving through Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who brings true shalom—wholeness—to all who wait on Him.

MEMORY VERSE

24 " ' "The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; 26 the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." ' - Numbers 6:24-26 NIV

Challenge – Find space this week to step away from the holiday busyness and quietly listen for God's still small voice to bring you peace.

Peace in Waiting Advent - Week 2

INTRODUCTION

The story of Jesus' birth is found in the Gospel of Luke. But Luke doesn't start with Mary and Joseph, he begins his Gospel with Zechariah and Elizabeth and the birth of their son John the Baptist. This couple experienced their own angelic visit and prophetic promise much as Mary and Joseph did. But theirs was six months earlier than Mary's. In Luke's account we are told Zechariah was attending to his duties as a priest in the Temple when Gabriel appeared. The appearance of an angel with a message from God was not a common occurrence, in fact, God had been silent for about 400 years. So, although it is understandable that an aged priest with a barren wife might have his doubts about this promised son, Zechariah paid the price for his unbelief. He was mute until the day the baby was born. In the meantime, God's promise was fulfilled and Elizabeth became pregnant. And yet God enabled them to have peace in their waiting until the birth of John. šālôm

Ice Breaker

How long will you wait on hold before hanging up?

Key Passages

19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time." ... 24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people." - Luke 1:19-20, 24-25 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Be Still and Listen

This season of Advent we are invited to join God in the pause, the in-between time, during which we reflect on Jesus' birth and await his return. In this week's passage, Zechariah and Elizabeth experienced their own period of waiting for the miraculous birth of their son, John the Baptist.

10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." - Psalm 46:10 NIV

There are many attitudes we can take during our waiting. We may be tense, anxious, impatient or we can observe what God instructs us to do in Psalm 46 and "be still" (rāpā) which means relax and sink down. What would you need to do in order to be still while you are waiting for God to move?

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." ... 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people." - Luke 1:18, 25 NIV

If we are listening to the voices in our own head while we wait, we probably can't hear God's voice. Zechariah's immediate response to Gabriel reflected his doubt. As a result, he was unable to speak during his time of waiting. That might have been a gift since it allowed God to transform his faith in the silence of waiting. His physical voice was silenced. But the first response we see from Elizabeth is praise.

Is there an answer from God you are waiting for? What can you praise God for in your waiting? As you express your praise, let God fill you with His peace.

During her childless years Elizabeth probably felt passed over. When we don't see God move it is easy to become discouraged. But God is at work even when we don't see it. We must wait patiently and quiet our hearts as we listen for that still small voice to speak.

2. A Long Obedience

14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. ... 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. - Luke 1:14-15, 41 NIV

Six months had passed when Mary visited Elizabeth. This was when Gabriel's prophesy about John was fulfilled. An expectant mother is by definition, in a time of waiting. But in the presence of Mary, with Jesus in her womb, Elizabeth's time of obedience waiting was rewarded.

42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" - Luke 1:42-45 NIV

What was the evidence that John was filled with the Holy Spirit before his birth? How was Elizabeth blessed at that time?

When Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit she began to prophesy. We aren't told what details Mary had shared with her, but Elizabeth declared God's truth about Mary's pregnancy; Mary was blessed by God, and her child (Jesus) was blessed by God.

What is the significance of the way Elizabeth referred to Mary's child in v. 43? How does v. 45 also apply to Elizabeth?

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." ... 62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. ... 67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: 68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. - Luke 1:59-60, 62-64, 67-68 NIV

At the baby's circumcision, friends and relatives had assumed he would be named after his father. They were shocked when Elizabeth said his name was John. This is the point at which Zechariah's long obedience is rewarded.

What was Zechariah's act of obedience in this passage? Compare the last thing Zechariah said to Gabriel to the first thing He said after John was born. How had the crucible of waiting transformed him?

19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. - Isaiah 43:19 NIV

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." - Luke 1:76-79 NIV

In his prophetic song, how did Zechariah show that he now understood what God was doing?