

Text: Luke 1:11-20

Title: "Hush Up and Listen!"

Introduction: Happy Thanksgiving everybody! And Merry Christmas! Do you all have your shopping done yet? Black Friday is over...

This year the world will spend approximately \$450 Billion on the holiday of Christmas. \$450Billion! Who will they spend this money on? They will spend it mostly on themselves and their loved ones. On December 24th and 25th (according to your family tradition) there are going to be a whole lot of people treated like it's *their* Birthday! For most of them, it's not! We celebrate ... we get off of school ... we have parties ... we dress up our houses, offices and ourselves ... we bake cookies ... we are extra nice to each other (as long as we aren't shopping against each other) ... we sing songs ... we meet at the church ... because a Baby was born. It's not our birthday; it's Jesus' Birthday!

So, again this year, we are going to be challenged to treat Christmas like Jesus' Birthday!

I remember being very young and finding out that Christmas was all about a baby being born and laid in a manger. Do you know what my response was? "Cool ... when can we go see Santa?" I was a kid. I liked going to church and all, but I was a kid. I found out early in life that Christmas meant toys and stuff for ME! I wanted my piece of the action! I was a KID!

Do you know what our Scripture says? It says, "Grow Up!" I Corinthians 13: 11=¹¹ *It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.*¹

Please know that you are not alone this year. There are many of us who are trying to overcome our childish ways...

Over the next four weeks leading up to Christmas, we are going to study four Biblical characters that played a part in the birth of Jesus and the birth of Christianity. We are going to watch as each of these characters figures out in his or her own way that life was not about them. They are going to find that even though they experienced some pretty significant life happenings, it wasn't their Birthday that was about to be celebrated.

Let's Pray!

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline walking us through our Scripture. You will see that there are blanks to fill in ... I would love to have you take the time to do so. Grab a pen and write down whatever else you think is important to you and your faith journey. After worship, take this home and refrigerate it. Please Re-read the Scripture and the notes to keep growing and learning. For those of you listening on-line or IPODing, you can download the outline off of our website so you too can take notes.

First, a little background... For this series, we will be using the 1st Chapter of the Book of Luke. Luke is one of the four (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) Gospels (stories of Jesus). The author, Luke, was not one of the original 12 apostles, but was a physician /

¹Holy Bible: New Living Translation. 1997 (1 Co 13:10). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.

doctor / type “A” personality that was close friends with the Apostle Paul. Luke’s plan was to write the story of Jesus in a factual way. Luke did not want anyone to be able to disprove anything that he wrote, so he took time to do all the research and interviews of people who were with Jesus. He double and triple checked the stories to insure accuracy.

Luke starts right at the beginning ... before the birth of Jesus. He sets the stage by telling who was in office. Herod the Great was the King of the Jews under the Roman Empire from 37-4BC. So, Jesus’ birth took place near the end of his time as King.

These were very difficult times for the Jewish nation. They had been promised a Messiah (Savior), but the last time the Jews had a prophet speak on behalf of God was about 400 years before when Malachi spoke. There had been a 400 year drought from hearing God’s leadings... 400 years of priests and people praying for their Messiah to come and rescue them from their enemies.

Now, Israel had twelve tribes named after the twelve (12) sons of Jacob (Genesis 49). The tribe of Aaron was the tribe of priests. From the tribe of Aaron came 24 orders of priests. Each of these 24 orders of priests took charge of the Temple in Jerusalem twice a year for a week each time (52 weeks). In each of these orders were anywhere from 600-1000 priests. That’s 18,000 to 24,000 priests for the Temples in Jesus’ day.

I. Zechariah and Elizabeth (vs. 5-10)

- A. Now, you and I know that some of the priests that were serving the Temple in the time of Jesus were not really following God (see the many stories of Jesus and the Pharisees / Sadducees / Teachers of the Law). But, we know that Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth were faithful to the Law and to God.
1. v. 7 = “...were righteous in God’s eyes...”
 2. We know that Zechariah and Elizabeth are old (v.7) and unable to conceive children.
 3. Two problems with not having children in 1st Century Middle East...
 - a. 1 = Economically – If you did not have children, you did not have help with the family work (farming, shepherding, fishing, etc.) and you did not have anyone to care for you when you grew older.
 - b. 2 = Socially – Most believed that if a woman could not have children, that was God taking that privilege away because of disobedience. Luke makes it clear that is not the case with Elizabeth and Zechariah.
- B. Zechariah was a priest in the hill country of Judah outside of Jerusalem. Twice a year his order was asked to perform the duties of the main Temple in Jerusalem.
1. One of the duties was the burning of incense in the Temple representing the prayers of all the people of Jerusalem.
 2. A priest would go in before the morning sacrifices on the altar or after the afternoon sacrifices and offer prayers to God and burn incense. *This was a great privilege and honor.*

3. But, this only took a few minutes behind closed doors before emerging again to tell the people that their prayers were heard by God.
 4. If his order only served the temple two weeks out of a year and there were a thousand priests in his order, Zechariah had maybe one or two chances in his lifetime to be the one to burn the incense.
 5. How did they choose which priest? They cast lots / threw dice to see who got to go in.
- C. I remember as a kid using chance things to try to find out what God wanted me to do or wanted for me. “Okay, if she turns and looks at me now, God must want me to ask her out... okay, now... okay, now!”
1. Did you know that God DOES work like that?
 2. When the priests were casting lots to find out which priest was going to burn the incense this time, God was not hoping or crossing His fingers so that Zechariah would get to go in; God was not surprised by the outcome; God had not been waiting for years for Zechariah’s turn! God knew and took care of it!
 3. So, Zechariah wins and goes in the Temple and begins to burn the incense ... here’s what happens:

READ LUKE 1:11-20 NOW!

II. In the Temple (vs. 11-17)

- A. Let me ask you a question. What was Zechariah praying for? The angel said, “God has heard your prayer.” What prayer?
1. My guess is that it was not about having a son ... Zechariah knew that his wife was beyond her child-bearing years ... but, it was about the Messiah coming (as had been prayed by priests for the past 400 years).
 2. The people of Israel had been promised for generations that there would come a Savior. Someone who would completely transform life as they knew it.
 3. Of course, most Jews idea of a Savior was a political figure that would rid their country of the Roman Empire and any other enemies so they could live in peace.
- B. Okay, so Zechariah is in the temple burning incense and praying, and suddenly an angel appears.
1. Zechariah is full of fear (not that we wouldn’t be!).
 2. The angel assures the priest that he has nothing to be afraid of and that his wife, Elizabeth, will have a son!
 3. Not only will you have a son, but you will name him “John”, meaning “Grace of God” ... “A blessing from God not deserved”.

4. Not only will you have a son named John (this is the angel speaking), but he will bring you and God joy. He will be a boy and a man of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring many Israelites back to God. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord / Messiah you all have been waiting for!

C. Wow!

III. **I Don't Believe It... (vs. 18-20)**

- A. Awesome, huh?!? But, what was Zechariah focused on? He and his wife's age. Zechariah heard 'son' and thought about how that couldn't be ... we cannot have kids at this age!
 1. I wonder how many times we have lost opportunities to serve God's Kingdom because we got caught up in the details.
 2. I wonder how many times we have missed out on God's plan for us to have great joy and adventure in this life because WE decided that God couldn't do what we thought God said...
 3. I wonder how many times we get caught on one little detail that we don't think God can handle and miss out on all the other stuff God wanted to do.
- B. God sent a messenger to meet Zechariah in the Temple at that moment to make sure Zechariah was aware that God was about to change the world and use Zechariah and his wife to do it, and Zechariah doubted... He wanted a sign.
- C. Well, he got one. Because of his doubting, Zechariah was caused by God to be mute for the next nine months. He couldn't talk!
- D. Zechariah was so caught up in the whole child idea that he thought this conversation with the angel was about him. BUT, it wasn't about him ... it wasn't his birthday ... God used Zechariah and Elizabeth to set in motion another Birthday. The Birthday that would change the world for good!

IV. **...Okay, Now I Do! (vs. 21-25)**

- A. Some people can see that God can move and things can happen long before they happen ... others have to see it to believe it. The ones who have to wait to see it fall into two categories: 1) I'm going to watch and hope that it happens the way they say, and 2) I'm going to watch and hope it never happens because I didn't think it could happen and I don't want to be wrong, so while I'm watching I'm going to talk down about the idea...
- B. When Zechariah walked out of that Temple on that special day, I bet he believed that God could do whatever God wanted. There was Zechariah and all the people waiting outside the Temple to hear if their prayers were answered. And Zechariah could not say a thing!
 1. When we don't believe God, we really have nothing to say or offer other people. Other people need to hear about a life of faith in God, but if we don't believe we have nothing to offer them.

2. People need their lives transformed, but the only way to invite them to that is to believe ourselves...
- C. Do you all believe that God has called us to transform the world around us? Good! We are going to!
- D. I don't want to get caught doubting God like Zechariah did. I want to be able to talk about how God has impacted the world and changed the world for good!
1. This Christmas, again, we are supporting ministry to orphans across the world through InterHope / OrphanSave.org.
 2. Over the past few years, we have been able to help hundreds of orphans experience a transformation in their lives.
 3. Last year we pledged to give money to put school uniforms on children in India and provide a water pump and tank for an orphanage in Cambodia... watch (SHOW VIDEO HERE!)
 4. You changed the world for good!
 5. I say we do it again ... Thad Wilkinson tells me that last year InterHope was able to add on to all 7 of their orphanages and between them, they have 100 new beds to house 100 new orphans.
 6. BUT, it costs to rescue kids from whatever they are caught up in ... slave labor, drug rings, child prostitution. It costs to pay informants to find the kids ... it costs to buy those kids out of their present reality...
 7. Our part?!? Our part is to buy \$50 t-shirts. The proceeds go toward helping rescue 100 children in 2010 ... 100 in '10!
 8. If you cannot afford a t-shirt on your own:
 - a. Go in with someone else and split the t-shirt.
 - b. Take a pledge sheet, collect \$50 and bring the money in for a t-shirt.
 - c. By the way, again this year, we have someone from our churches, who has decided to match-gift whatever you give for the orphans from today on up to \$2500.00. If you give \$2500.00 to the orphans, they will too!

I can see us changing the world for good, locally and world-wide ... even if Zechariah got caught up in the details...

Let's Pray!