God’s word never fails

Luke 1: 1-38

**Key Verse 35 “The angle answered, ’The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God”**

I thank God for this special season where God gives us a chance to devote ourselves and with peace in heart meditate on the salvation work which God has prepared for the world. This time of the year is a special time, not because of holidays nor because of gifts and meals. This time is very special because we get a chance to deeply thank God for his grace on the whole earth by sending his one and only son to the world. Today will be the first message of our Christmas season taken from the book of Luke. We will cover the first 38 verses from chapter one.

Before meditating on the word of God, I wanted to note that Luke was the only Gentile who wrote and account for the gospel events. All other gospels and books, except the book of acts which is written by Luke as well, are written by people from Israel starting from Genesis. The second note is that Luke was a physician or a doctor and has an investigative and orderly mind while he wrote the gospel.

Look at verse 1-4, this is an introduction to the gospel of Luke. It shows how Luke’s style is different as a scholar. Luke emphasized that he carefully investigated everything from the beginning and then decided to write orderly account. It is very precious to have a faithful man of God who can take this task to bring the message of our salvation through our LORD Jesus Christ to next generations.

In today’s message I chose to focus on the first two parts of the first chapter in this book. The first part is the birth of John the Baptist foretold from verses 5 to 25 and the second part is the birth of Jesus foretold from verses 26-38.

**Part one: The birth of John the Baptist foretold**

Look at verses 5-7. The gospel describes elderly couple, who were both descendants of Aaron from the division of Abijah. They were both righteous in the sight of God observing God’s commands and decrees blamelessly. If you remember what we Just studied in the book of Zacharia in the Old testament how hard was it to keep the people of God faithful and focusing on God even when they just came back from exile to Jerusalem. Now after 400 years and many added traditions and hypocritical acts it was very amazing to find a couple like Zacharia and Elizabeth, who could observe God’s commands blamelessly, and be righteous in the eyes of God considering the religious environment that surrounded them. They did this all their lives and they are now old couple. You can get the picture of how difficult this must have been and how precious these two servants were to God. This couple had only one issue, they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old. This means, biologically it was very difficult if not impossible for Elizabeth to carry a child. Many couple face this situation and they have peace with it. God chooses what to do and decides for what reason he wants a couple in his history to carry a child or not. When I got married with Iris, we had infertility issues. We tried everything possible to have a child. At that time even Iris had a surgery for that reason. We did several ways from insemination to invitro. We were prayerful and pleaded with God to have a child. But all tries failed. The last time we were coming out of Gottlieb Hospital. We sat down on a bench by the hospital, I held Iris’ hands and for the first time we accepted God’s will whatever it may be. We prayed to God, LORD we really wanted to have a child, a gift from you to grow under your wings, but if it is your will for us not to have a child, we will accept it. Our debts were accumulating, and we did not have any more means to keep spending on hospital bills. God heard our prayers; and four months later Iris became pregnant naturally without any treatments. It was a miracle and a gift from God. He desired for us to have a child and he simply did. The name “Nathanael” means the gift of God. He is the gift that God gave us. I wanted to emphasize here that only after we made peace with God in our hearts to accept his will for us no matter what the result was; God responded to us with a precious gift.

Look at verses 8-10, At that time there were around 18 to 20 thousand priests. Any of them could be chosen by a lot to enter the holy place of God. So, some might not be chosen to enter the holy place their whole lives. God chose Zacharia by lot to serve in the holy place to burn incense. Zacharia was chosen because God chose to send him a message during the worship time. And what was that message?

Look at verses 11-13, Let’s read verse 13 **“But the angel said to him; Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.”** When the angel appeared to Zechariah in the holy place, he was understandably very afraid. Please remember that the last time God spoke to his people was when he spoke to the Zechariah of the old testament, which was 400 years earlier. Now God is sending a message to Zechariah of the new testament. Zechariah prayed for a child in his youth after he got married. Most likely Zechariah prayed for a child while he saw that there was a hope. Over the years that hope was dimensioning with every passing year. Then he lost hope that there is any way to have a child. He gave up praying and with his wife accepted that they will not have a child. This prayer topic was forgotten by Zechariah, but it was not forgotten by God. God fulfill his plans in his own time and not in our time. God chooses the right time for his plan even when it seems that it is not the right or convenient time in our own eyes. It was time for Zechariah and Elizabeth to have a child even at this old age when it seemed not possible humanly. I will testify again about my story when I encountered God in my life. I know that each one of you have their own story with God. Here I testify what I encountered. In the year 1999 which was more that 20 years ago, God called me to go for mission work to Sudan. I was single, I still had two semesters in my MBA program at the University and I was living here on a student visa. I knew if I went at that time, I might not be able to come back freely and would not have finished my master’s program. Also I was not married yet. God gave me peace in my heart, and I accepted God’s calling for me to go to Sudan. But for some reason God blocked my way to go to Sudan after I accepted. I was able to finish my MBA program by end of 1999. God was preparing a partner for me who will accept my same mission to go to Sudan and this was not an easy task to accept. God found me the right suitable helper who would go with me to Sudan and I got married. After marriage, my coworker was looking everywhere for a job in Sudan so that we can go. She felt with a push from her side we can go, but God had different idea. I went to Sudan for a conference in 2002 and came back with TB which required me a surgery with 50% chance of success. I recovered and visited Sudan again in 2004. During the time we were praying for a child and it was a difficult time. Our financial situation was not good, and we had so much debt to pay. A gift child came in Jan 2005. I was very happy but later in the year I fell in despair because of the financial difficulties we were facing. In Dec of 2005 I held my wife’s hand and for the first time in our marriage I said” let’s forget about going to Sudan and build our lives here in Chicago. We have so much debt and a child to take care of.” I gave up and we planned how to solve our family issues in 2006. It seemed with the situation we were in that our prayers to go out were impossible. Then Just two weeks after we prayed and decided to stay, God opened the door for a job offer in Sudan. It was God’s time not our time. After 7 years of waiting, God sent me to Sudan, and I was in the airplane on Feb 28th, 2006. I was amazed at the way God works. Zechariah forgot his prayer topic and it seemed impossible to have a child, but God had his own plan and time for him, not just that, God also had a complete plan for the newborn baby. We will see this complete plan in the next few verses.

Look at verse 14-17, Now the angel described to Zechariah how would John’s life be, and how he would be consecrated to God. First, having John will bring joy and delight to Zechariah who waited so long to have a child, and many will rejoice because of him. Second, he will be great in the sight of God. Then the angel described his life, that he will not take wine or fermented drink and be filled with the holy spirit even before he is born. To understand the Holy Spirit point, let me compare other people who received the Holy Spirit in God’s history. When Saul was chosen to be a king, only then he received the spirit of God. The disciples of Jesus stayed with him for more than three and a half years, but they only received the holy spirit after Jesus resurrected and was ascended to heaven. John received the Holy Spirit even before he was born. Jesus called John a great man and none like him. He was great because he was dedicated from God to prepare the way for the LORD. Most importantly, the angel described John’s mission in his life. Let’s read verse 17 **“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous- to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”** This was John’s mission which he was called to fulfill. Growing up and studying God’s words, John completely understood the mission he was given by God. He was constantly full of the Holy Spirit. Let’s see what Zechariah’s reaction to this news and what was the angel’s reply.

Look at verse 18-20. Zechariah was wondering how he could be sure of this. This was a natural normal human reaction. It did not make much sense to him after all this time. The timing was wrong in his mind. He prayed for many years and nothing happened. Now after he became old and gave up on having a child, God came to give him a child. Zechariah undoubtedly was a strong believer and a righteous man in the eyes of God, but in this point and specially for this issue he doubted God and did not fully trust God. The angel declared who he was. He was Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God. We always knew that Jesus stands on the right hand of God, but we did not know who would stand of the left hand of God, it is most likely Gabriel who is constantly in the presence of God. He came by himself to bring this news to Zechariah. This was a very important news because John was a major part of God’s salvation plan through Jesus Christ. Because of this unbelief, Zechariah was given a discipline from God. Let’s read verse 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.”** This type of discipline and training was very amazing, necessary and beneficial to Zechariah. It gave him time to meditate on God’s way of work and fully accept God’s plan. It gave him a chance to trust God and his plan. I know that some of us experienced this silence training because sometimes silence is the best faithful act a person can take to prevent them from hindering a going on work of God because of their own agenda or their own way of thinking about God’s work. It helps them to internalize and look at the bigger picture of God’s work. The people who assembled for prayer in the temple were waiting for Zechariah. He took a long time to complete his duty. When he came out not speaking, they realized that he received a vision. This was a big news for them since they did not hear from God for 400 years.

**Part two: The birth of Jesus foretold**

Six months after communicating with Zechariah, the angel Gabriel came to communicate with another person.

Look at verse 26-28, God sent Gabriel to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. This fulfills the prophecy that the Messiah will come from the line of David. Gabriel spoke to Mary, the virgin girl, and said **“Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.”** This greeting shows us that Mary was favored by God. And this means that God chose her because of his grace on her. Even though Mary was faithful and had so many beautiful Godly qualities in her, she was not chosen because of these qualities. Mary was chosen because of God’s grace in her life. God favored her. So, Mary is not the subject of worship, but we praise God because of Mary. Let’s see why?

Look at verses 29-33 **“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”** It is very intimidating to encounter an experience with God like this. Mary did not hear that any of her family members experienced the same, not her father nor her grandfather back to 400 years. Only Zechariah encountered the angel of God after those years. So, naturally she was afraid. Gabriel calmed her down and assured her so that she won’t be afraid. Then Gabriel gave her the mission of her life to conceive and give birth to a son and he will be called Jesus. The angel described the child to be the Son of the Most High, and he will have authority over Jacob’s descendants forever. This means that he will reign in heaven and on earth. This is the fulfillment of God’s promise to all people to be saved from sin and death, and be free in God. This is also a declaration of eternity where Jesus will live with his people forever. Look at verse 34 **“How will this be, ‘Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin?** Remember Mary was a young girl and this was a natural question to ask. She asked this question innocently, not because she mistrusted God, but because of her curiosity. God did not take it on her as disobedience and did not discipline her for this question, instead the angel gave the details of how this will be.

Let’s read verse 35 **“The angle answered, ’The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God”** Here the angel clearly explained to her that she will carry a baby by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that bay is a holy one and is the Son of God. This is a clear explanation who Jesus would be. Jesus is the Son of God who received all authority from God the Father. Jesus is God from God that will rule and lead his people to salvation. The angle mentioned to Mary about Elizabeth to confirm to her that there is nothing impossible for God. Even with her old age, Elizabeth carried a baby and she is six months pregnant. The angel reaffirmed that the word of God does not fail. God keeps his promises and fulfills what he says.

Let’s read verse 38 **“I am the Lord’s servant, ‘Mary answered, ‘May your word to me be fulfilled. ‘Then the angel left her”** Mary’s answer revealed her complete submission and obedience to the will of God. There are many consequences based on her decision, but she was very happy to be part of God’s history and to carry Jesus as a gate way for the Lord to be among us. Mary was an obedient faithful woman with many beautiful characters. She was one of the most faithful and beautiful people who lived on earth. We praise God for her day and night, but again she is not the object of worship. Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ who is the object of worship.

I thank God that he uses people who have faith in his history, there are few people in that generation who had faith, but God with his favor chose Zechariah, responded to his prayers for a child, but not any child, a child who would prepare the way for Jesus. Then God chose a faithful Mary to carry the Son of God Jesus. God chose them because of his grace upon them. I pray that God choose each one of you for a great mission he set you for and I pray that you will accept your mission and fulfill it. Amen.