

Sermon Series: TRANSFORMATION
Sermon Title: Hope Is On The Way!
Text: Luke 1:5-25

Discussion Questions:

- ~ How would you define the word hope?
- ~ How does a Christian's understanding of the future give them hope in the present?
- ~ Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Which parts of this passage inspire hope?
- ~ Read Revelation 21:1-7. Which parts of this passage inspire hope?
- ~ How do you need hope in your life today?

Examination:

Our focus this morning is an account of Zechariah and Elizabeth - and the announcement Gabriel the angel made to them that they would have a son. Luke's account of these events fall naturally into three main sections: The setting; The announcement; The Response.

• Read **Luke 1:5-7 (The Setting)**

- *"In the time of Herod king of Judea..."*
 - There are two "Herod's" mentioned in the Bible. The first, "Herod the Great", was the ruler at the time of Jesus' birth. His son, "Herod Antipas", was the ruler at the time of Jesus' death. Both of these men were vicious and cruel - but Herod the Great was especially so. Here are some historical facts describing Herod the Great:
"Due to continual palace rumors and paranoia over his potential overthrow, Herod murdered his beloved Mariamne and several other members of his family and household [that's right—he had a wife that he "loved" assassinated]. When a group of "wise men", newly arrived in Jerusalem from the East, told Herod that a "king of the Jews" had been born in Bethlehem, Herod ordered the massacre of all male children in the area under the age of two (see Matthew, chapter 2). For years, Herod suffered acute kidney failure complicated by either scabies or Fournier Gangrene which slowly destroyed his body and eventually drove him even more insane than he already was. His several attempts at suicide were only thwarted by those of his inner circle. Because Herod knew that the entire country would rejoice at his passing, he ordered that every Jewish priest be slaughtered upon news of his death so the country would be forced into mourning.
 - These historical facts of Herod the Great highlight that Jesus entered this world at a time when there was absolutely NO HOPE to be found in the political/governmental situation. Why do you think God would have CHOSEN for Jesus to come into this world "in the time of Herod king of Judea"?
- We're told in v. 6 that both Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in the sight of God - blameless in their observance of the law. Why do you think God wanted us to know this fact about their lives?
- Compare what you know of Abram & Sarai with Zechariah & Elizabeth.

• Read **Luke 1:8-17 (The Announcement)**

- Zechariah was “chosen by lot” (v. 9) to go into the temple to burn the incense. This is the equivalent of a coin toss - or a throw of the dice. Do you think God waited until the lot fell to Zechariah to dispatch Gabriel - or do you think God controlled the outcome of this lot (*FYI - there were as many as 8,000 priests in Zechariah’s day. This honor of being selected would likely only happen just a handful of times in the lifetime of a priest*).
 - If you truly believe that God controlled the outcome of the lot - how does that impact what you believe about God’s involvement in your every-day life? How does this give you hope?
- In verse 13 - Gabriel informs Zechariah “his prayer has been heard.” Discuss whether you think this had been a recent prayer - or a prayer that he and Elizabeth had prayed many years earlier (or both)? Is it even reasonable for a couple - say in their 70’s - to pray for God to give them a child? Isn’t it better to “give up hope” and face reality?
- We’ve spent a good bit of time these past couple of months talking (as a church) about the Holy Spirit. Discuss the implications of their son, John, being filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born. Why do you think God would do this? Why does God want us to know this?
- There are four things mentioned that John’s ministry will accomplish (v. 16-17). Discuss each one:
 - He will “bring back” many Jews to the Lord their God.
 - He will turn the hearts of parents to their children.
 - He will turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous.
 - He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

• Now read **Luke 1:18-25 (The Response)**

- Why do you think Zechariah doubted what Gabriel told him (v. 18)?
- Put in your own words what Gabriel says in response (vv. 19-20).
- Act out what you think Zechariah did after exiting the temple (vv. 21-22). Think of this as a game a charades ☺
- For over 9 months Zechariah was unable to speak...which came as a form of discipline in his life. Do you think God still does this sort of thing in people’s lives (not specifically dumbness - but other types of physical limitations)?
- We saw at the beginning of the account that Elizabeth was “*righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands blamelessly.*” And yet we see in v. 25 that her barrenness caused her to carry a deep sense of disgrace. Do you think this is typical - that we needlessly walk in shame and guilt when this isn’t how God see’s us?

Application:

~ If you’re a parent, grandparent, or significant other in the life of a child - how is God wanting to turn your heart to the children in your life?

~ How is God wanting to turn your disobedience to the wisdom of the righteous?

~ Are you a person prepared for the Lord? How can God use you to make others ready for Him?