

Reflection Questions: Luke 1:5-25

For the message, "Just Before The Dawn" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on December 2, 2018

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Luke 1:5-25

A summary of the message: For many Christians around the world, Advent is a season of feeling more acutely the brokenness of this world and of our lives, but it's also a hoping more deeply in the coming of Jesus to set this world to right.

In his Gospel, Luke is going to introduce us to Jesus by first introducing us to his relatives, specifically, Zechariah (whose name means "The Lord has remembered") and Elizabeth, an elderly, childless couple living under the ruthless reign of Herod the Great.

In a situation in which they would be tempted to feel forgotten, an angel appears to Zechariah to tell him his prayers have been answered. Somehow, the good news of God's salvation for Israel and the world will pass first through their son, John (whose name means "The Lord is gracious"), who will be the forerunner of the Messiah heralding Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Key Quotes:

- Beware of allowing the circumstances of your life to have the final say in your life.
- Alan Redpath, "There is no circumstance, no trouble, no testing, that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment."
- Martin Luther, The Gospel is "glad tidings, good news, welcome information, a shout, something that would make one sing and talk and rejoice."
- The Apostle John in 1 John 2:8, "...I am writing to you..., because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- Zechariah and Elizabeth were an elderly, childless couple living in Israel under the brutal Roman ruler, Herod the Great. Given what you know, how might they be tempted to allow circumstances the final say in their lives?
- Do you find yourself sympathizing with Zechariah? Why or why not?

- When Zechariah hears the message (the “Good News”) from the angel Gabriel, he doubts. As Philip Ryken said, “He had his biology right, but not his theology.” What did Ryken mean by that? And how does that help us clarify what we believe is possible with God?

2. Let’s think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus’ followers.

- Zechariah and Elizabeth lived “just before the dawn,” that is, they lived just before the entrance of Jesus into the world as the Light of the world. What does it mean for us to live as people who live between the first Advent of Jesus and his second Advent? In other words, Jesus the true light of the world has come, but we still await his second coming to make all things new (Rev. 21:5). As John the Apostle put it, “...I am writing to you..., because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining” (1 John 2:8).
 - What kind of thoughts and attitudes should mark us as a community of faith if we took this truth seriously?
 - What would we need to change? What would we need to repent of?
- Alan Redpath writes, “There is no circumstance, no trouble, no testing, that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment.”
 - How should this truth inform the kind of community of faith we ought to be (cf. Romans 8:28)?

3. Let’s think about how this text applies to our city.

- What questions do you think people in our city would ask of this text? And how might we address them?
- Luke knew that angels don’t just appear to people every day, especially to elderly childless couples telling them that they have now been swept up into the story of God. And yet Luke—who interviewed the eyewitnesses—thought it important to include this key piece of the story of Jesus for us. Why do you think Luke risked telling us this part of the story when he could of easily left it out? In other words, how is he challenging the way that people then (and now) think about how God interacts with the world?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points...

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