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LESSONS FROM LUKE

LENT DEVOTIONAL

MARCH 1-4

Day 1 – Read Luke 1:1-25—Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us. Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus. I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received. During the rule of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. They were both righteous before God, blameless in their observance of all the Lord’s commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to become pregnant and they both were very old. One day Zechariah was serving as a priest before God because his priestly division was on duty. Following the customs of priestly service, he was chosen by lottery to go into the Lord’s sanctuary and burn incense. All the people who gathered to worship were praying outside during this hour of incense offering. An angel from the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and overcome with fear. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many people will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the Lord’s eyes. He must not drink wine and liquor. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. He will bring many Israelites back to the Lord their God. He will go forth before the Lord, equipped with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and he will turn the disobedient to righteous patterns of thinking. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure of this? My wife and I are very old.” The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in God’s presence. I was sent to speak to you and to bring this good news to you. Know this: What I have spoken will come true at the proper time. But because you didn’t believe, you will remain silent, unable to speak until the day when these things happen.” Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he was in the sanctuary for such a long time. When he came out, he was unable to speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he gestured to them and couldn’t speak. When he completed the days of his priestly service, he returned home. Afterward, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She kept to herself for five months, saying, “This is the Lord’s doing. He has shown his favor to me by removing my disgrace among other people.”

It is fairly well-known that Luke was an educated physician. Being a physician, he was focused on facts and details. Being educated, he had no problem writing about those facts and details in a way that people could understand and believe. Do you ever think how amazing it is that the writings from nearly 2,000 years ago continue to be used, read, studied and preached today?

Luke didn’t have access to the information we have today. He couldn’t google who the leaders were. He didn’t pull up the scriptures on his computer and search for prophecies to ensure everything he wrote fit with everything that was predicted. He was able to travel and speak to eye witnesses, but not like we travel today where a 60-mile journey takes an hour. Think about all the information we have access to. It shows up in newsfeeds and on social media. Think about how much of that information is credible. How much of what you read today do you think will be around in 2,000 years? Most of the so called facts we read about today are proven to be wrong tomorrow. The textbooks I used in college are no longer relevant. How did the writings of someone like Luke survive that many years?

It is because he used facts and details that you cannot refute. King Herod did actually rule Judea. The priestly customs that Luke references were accurate. Nazareth was in Galilee. Thankfully for us believers, over 2,000 years people have been unable to disprove Luke’s writings. The verses in this devotional aren’t another unbelievable link to a story your friend sent you on Facebook. They are the Words of God through Luke and we can be assured they will be around for another 2,000 years.

-Jeremy Skoglund

Day 2 - Read Luke 1:26-80—*When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David’s house. The virgin’s name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, “Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!” She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom.” Then Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen since I haven’t had sexual relations with a man?” The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God’s Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled ‘unable to conceive’ is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God.” Then Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.” Then the angel left her. Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, “God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her.” Mary said, “With all my heart I glorify the Lord! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior. He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations. He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.” Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home. When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a boy. Her neighbors and relatives celebrated with her because they had heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy. On the eighth day, it came time to circumcise the child. They wanted to name him Zechariah because that was his father’s name. But his mother replied, “No, his name will be John.” They said to her, “None of your relatives have that name.” Then they began gesturing to his father to see what he wanted to call him. After asking for a tablet, he surprised everyone by writing, “His name is John.” At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God. All their neighbors were filled with awe, and everyone throughout the Judean highlands talked about what had happened. All who heard about this considered it carefully. They said, “What then will this child be?” Indeed, the Lord’s power was with him. John’s father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, “Bless the Lord God of Israel because he has come to help and has delivered his people. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David’s house, just as he said through the mouths of his holy prophets long ago. He has brought salvation from our enemies and from the power of all those who hate us. He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and remembered his holy covenant, the solemn pledge he made to our ancestor Abraham. He has granted that we would be rescued from the power of our enemies so that we could serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness in God’s eyes, for as long as we live. You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way. You will tell his people how to be saved through the forgiveness of their sins. Because of our God’s deep compassion, the dawn from heaven will break upon us, to give light to those who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide us on the path of peace.” The child grew up, becoming strong in character. He was in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.*

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my Savior. He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant...the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name.” Luke 1:46-49 CEB

How does God speak to you? Do you hear his voice when reading the Word, or in times of worship and prayer? Has God ever spoken into your life in a way you did not expect or even asked you to do something that seemed impossible? How did you respond?

In Luke chapter one, we witness God speaking to Mary through an angel. Upon hearing that she, a virgin, would become pregnant with the Messiah, her response is inexplicable. “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with

me just as you have said.” (Luke 1:37) Mary is face to face with what must have felt like impossible, overwhelming, life-altering words. Yet in today’s Scripture reading, she demonstrates acceptance, belief, trust, humility, and worship. Our lives may not include angelic visitors with messages of the Messiah, but when God speaks may we respond in a similar fashion. For “nothing is impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)

-Amanda Rue

Day 3 – Read Luke 2:1-20—*In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David’s house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David’s city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom. Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.” When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.*

As soon as my mother hung up the phone from our announcement she exclaimed to Dad, “Let’s go, when can we leave?”

The anticipation for their first grandchild must have exploded when the news of our daughter’s birth reached mother’s ear. For months she had claimed they would wait a few weeks to allow things to settle down; Let my wife’s mother visit first and stay awhile. Now even Dad, who knew mother best was shocked at her urgency. For generations the Israelites waited in anticipation of the Messiah’s birth. In Luke 2, the announcement comes directly from the heavenly hosts to the shepherds. At first shock, then urgency to see the baby their people had waited for so long.

Unlike my mother, they knew not the general time-frame nor if theirs would be the generation so blessed. Like the shepherds my mother now had no regard for the care of the livestock; she had a granddaughter to hold. The next morning, they were off!

The visit was grand yet greater still the witness of the baby. Mother told the neighbors, sent e-mails to distant relatives and shared photos with everyone, close friend or stranger. The shepherds had done the same, declaring to all the good news.

You have met the Messiah. He came from the Father that you may know him. Will you not share this good news? How could you withhold the joy and enthusiasm? Christ has come for all. Spread the joy of his birth!

-Kenton Carlson