



The Old Made New: From Doubt to Trust!

December 17, 2023

What was on your Christmas Wishlist?

Life is full of surprises and the unexpected!

Christmas Then

An unexpected visitor to an unsuspecting person

Luke 1:5-10

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old. 8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. 11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

With good reason, Zechariah responded rightly

Christmas Then

An unexpected message with astounding blessings

Luke 1:13-17

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. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 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."

With faithfulness, God was fulfilling a long-awaited, unimaginable, and unexpected promise.

Malachi 3:1

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.

Malachi 4:5-6

"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."

Christmas Then

An unexpected and unwise response to God's goodness

Luke 1:18-22

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." 19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 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." 21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. 22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

With consequence, Zechariah let doubt and disbelief hold him back from fully experiencing the blessings of God

Christmas Then

An unexpected gift despite the doubt and disbelief

Luke 1:23-25

When his time of service was completed, he returned home. 24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

With grace, God continued to fulfill His promises to Zechariah and blessed His family

Christmas Then

A long-awaited blessing brings great joy and renewed faith

Luke 1:57-64

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. 59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." 61 They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." 62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.

With renewed faith and voice, Zechariah celebrated God's goodness and faithfulness.

Zechariah's story should not just move us, it should move us to action!

Christmas Now

God still answers [prayer](#) even though it may take a lifetime

Is there an unanswered prayer you have stopped praying?

Christmas Now

God still pursues us with His [grace](#) even in our doubting

Is doubt holding you back from embracing and experiencing the grace of Jesus?

Christmas Now

God still works in [mysterious ways](#) to fulfill His purposes even in and through people like you!

Could doubt be holding you back from fully living out God's purpose for your life?