

Crossway Life Group, Week of December 1, First Sunday of Advent

See sermon notes on [CMC's webpage](#) for background information

Community

Take time to share and pray for each other's concerns and joys.

Scripture: Luke 1:5-25 Sermon: "The Good Gifts of the Good God"

Reading & Discussing Scripture

- **Sometimes following God's ways seems not to bring God's blessing.** Has this ever been your experience, or the experience of someone you care about? How so?
- The Gospel of Luke begins with a story about an elderly man and woman who had been serving God faithfully for decades, and yet seemed to be missing his blessing. Their experience shows us the real temptation to live faithfully, yet without faith, and also the goodness of God to always deliver on his promises. As we begin Advent, let's consider how to strengthen our trust and others' trust in God.
- **Read Luke 1:5-7.** How does Luke describe Elizabeth and Zechariah? How are their lives similar to Israel, the people of God, who were experiencing 400 seemingly silent years with no prophet or word from God? Why are these details important as the introduction to the story of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus?
- **Read Luke 1:8-20.** God heard the prayers of a discouraged man and people! What are God's promises that the angel brings to Zechariah and for God's people? **But...**having faith can be hard. What hindered Zechariah's courage to believe? In what way is the inability to speak a kindness to him and sign of God's teaching?
- **Read Luke 1:21-25.** What was the people's and Elizabeth's reactions to the events? What lessons can be learned from this story about understanding and responding to God's actions?

The Big Idea

**God's promises will always come true
They are not stopped by our unbelief
Yet our unbelief postpones our joy
or can make us miss His goodness altogether**

Application & Reflection Questions

- How have you seen trust in God be a means for God to bring joy even in times of trouble, for you or others?
- **Read James 1:6-7.** We leave God's good gifts 'unopened' by doubting him or disobeying him. How have you seen distrust in God cause us to miss the life and joy He has intended for us?
 - What hinders your trust? How might your words and actions undermine others' trust in God?
- **Read Psalm 25:1-3.** We 'open' the gifts of God by trusting him and obeying him.
 - What helps you trust God more? How can you help others trust God more?
 - What steps can you take during Advent this year to strengthen your trust AND to strengthen others' trust in God, especially in His work through the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Growing in Cultural Understanding

In some cultures, not having children brings disgrace to a couple, and can even be seen as a lack of God's blessing, even if the couple is godly. Thinking about your own cultural background, what ways might godly people experience shame or disgrace even when faithful to God? How can the church respond to support them and encourage trust in God?

Serving beyond ourselves

What are ways that your group can be for the benefit of people beyond yourselves?

Would your group consider **praying for our church's nominating committee**? This team is responsible to review people who are suggested as possible nominations for Board Member, Board Member/Elder, Nominating Committee member, and search committee member. Please pray for this committee:

- For wisdom about people and the Spirit's leading
- That they would not delay, and that they would not rush
- For God's provision of the right leadership for our church at this time

You can learn more about recommending people to be considered by going to

<https://crosswaychurch.org/members/nominating-committee/>. **The deadline is December 15.**

Luke 1:5-25 – New International Version (NIV)

⁵In 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. ⁶Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. ⁷But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

⁸Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

¹¹Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³But 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. ¹⁴He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵for 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. ¹⁶He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷And 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."

¹⁸Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

¹⁹The 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. ²⁰And 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."

²¹Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. ²²When 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.

²³When his time of service was completed, he returned home. ²⁴After 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."