

Tim Robinson...great job leading the preaching team. Modeling the way...wise, humble, and a wee bit sneaky! Tim preached on Gabriel's announcement to Mary. He assigned Garret to cover the Magnificat, Mary's response to Gabriel's words. For some reason, I was assigned Zacharias who the Bible tells us was "advanced in years." I can tell you from experience that things change as we age. Three things for sure – hair, our hearing and...I can't remember the third thing.

So, let's see what Luke 1 says about Z and E. Can you name the main characters in the Christmas story up to this point? We have Z and E. Their son John. And of course, Mary. But there is one character who is conspicuous by His absence. Who might that be? Joseph? No. The answer is the Holy Spirit. His fingerprints are all over this story. Take a look:

Lk. 1:15, "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb."

Lk 1:35, "The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

Lk. 1:41, "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit."

Lk. 1:67, "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied."

The leading role in Luke 1 is the Holy Spirit. I wonder what difference it would make if the Holy Spirit played the leading role in our lives this Christmas. Let's think about that this morning.

Life was full of disappointment for Israel in the first century. Luke 1:79 tells us they "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death." They were barely hanging on to the promise God gave through Isaiah that, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them." Is. 9:2. God's people longed for the day when the sun would come out and they would be saved from their enemies.

Zach and Elizabeth were experiencing their own disappointment. Because they were "advanced in years" they were childless. They were both born into priestly families and I'm sure they dreamed of having their own little priest. But that didn't happen. Life is full of disappointments. We become painfully aware of that as we get older. But things are about to change.

It all started when Zach. won the lottery. Out of 18,000 priests in Israel, he was chosen by lot to go inside the Holy Place and present one of two daily offerings on behalf of God's people. This was his big day, a once in a lifetime opportunity.

While Z. was in the temple an angel announced the good news that Elizabeth was pregnant. Z., the righteous priest, was doubtful and argued with Gabriel. "How could this be?" As a result of his unbelief, he was suddenly deaf and dumb. He would not only be unable to announce the benediction as he exits the temple, but he would not even be able to rejoice at the birth of his son. That seems harsh.

Gabriel was patient with Mary when she asked the exact same question but Zacharias gets penalized. Why? Because Zacharias was a priest. He knew the scriptures and, as an old man, had studied them for years. Had knew that God has opened the wombs of other barren women like Sara, Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah. These women were all childless until God intervened and did something remarkable. Elizabeth's pregnancy was a signal that God was up to something. God was about to renew His activity among His people. The sun was about to come out.

Fast forward to v. 67. Z. was filled with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied. His speech and hearing were not the only things restored. When you get a visit from the Holy Spirit several things happen?

**1. The Holy Spirit renews our confidence.** Notice that he speaks of redemption in the past tense...v. 68-69. He now has the faith to believe it has happened even though Jesus is not yet born. Nine months earlier Z. could not believe his wife would have a child. Now, filled with the Holy Spirit, he is so confident of God's redeeming work through the coming Messiah that he puts it in the past tense. For the mind of faith, a promised act of God is as good as done. Z. has learned to take God at his word and so has a remarkable assurance: "God has visited and redeemed!" What He has done before, He can do again.

"Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we."

Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

**2. The Holy Spirit refreshes our memory.** Lk. 1:70-75 expresses the goal of God's redemption plan - to make good on His covenant with His people. In fact, when He describes the New Covenant in Jer. 31, He says He will remember our sins no more. There is only one thing God doesn't remember – my sin!

God's purpose was to rescue His people from the hand of their enemies, so that we might serve Him without fear. God's plan from the beginning was to bring forth a holy and righteous people who would serve God without fear. The Holy Spirit reminds us that we were saved to serve. You don't have to earn God's approval. You just have to answer when He calls. "But I've done some stupid things." Well when God called me, He factored in my stupidity.

**3. The Holy Spirit refines our vision...** vv. 76-77. There had been no prophet for 400 years and this baby will become the focus of divine revelation. You can't overstate his emotions here. His own son will announce the coming of the Promised One. The sun is peeking out from behind the clouds not only for Z. and E. but for Israel...vv. 78-79.

We need the Holy Spirit. It is a dark time today. The sun seems to be setting on decency, civility, honesty, charity, but this passage reminds us that the sun also rises. God's Spirit makes all the difference in the way we view the future. Most of us know John 3:16. Maybe we should spend more time memorizing Luke 3:16. John said, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

**This Christmas, make room for the Spirit.** He will not force Himself upon us but we can squeeze Him out to the margins of our lives by allowing other influences to take up residence within us. The Bible says the flesh and the Spirit are at war. In other words, our tendency to focus on the things of earth blinds us to the reality of the things above. This time of year the battle between flesh and Spirit is intensified. Our affections are directed toward material things wrapped in bright, shiny packages. Northpark Mall – Lights and carols and ribbons and trees. Most people walk through there and never look up – everything is at eye-level. Why did our ancestors build cathedrals the way they did? To force our eyes upward toward that beautiful cathedral ceiling. Some of them knew something we need to remember – the only way to find what we are looking for is by looking UP!



# ADVENT

T H E C H R I S T H A S C O M E



**"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor,  
and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb."**

**LUKE 1:15**

**"The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."**

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**"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit."**

**LUKE 1:41**

**"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied."**

**LUKE 1:67**

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**THE HOLY SPIRIT RENEWS OUR CONFIDENCE.**

**67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,**

**LUKE 1:67-69**



**THE HOLY SPIRIT REFRESHES OUR MEMORY.**

**"Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we."**

**CHESTERTON, ORTHODOXY**

**70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; 72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.**

**LUKE 1:70-75**

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**THE HOLY SPIRIT REFINES OUR VISION.**

**76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,**

**LUKE 1:76-77**

**"I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."**

**LUKE 3:16**