

CHRISTMAS OUTTAKES - Part 1

Elizabeth & Zechariah

Randy Hageman

Part of Christmas Outtakes

November 23, 2021

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It's easy for us to compare our daily lives with someone else's ____, but that's really not a fair comparison.

This Christmas we want to look at the *whole* story, the ____ stuff along with the parts we like and remember.

In many ways, the messed-up stuff, the outtakes, may sometimes help us really relate to not just the people of the Bible, but the ways the stories of Christmas can really speak to us ____.

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

—Luke 1:5-7 (ESV)

Luke tells us both Zechariah and Elizabeth were very “righteous before God,” seeking to ____ Him in everything they did.

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.

—Luke 1:8-10 (ESV)

This opportunity to “burn incense” inside the Temple itself would have been a once in a ____ experience for a priest.

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And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.

—Luke 1:11-12 (ESV)

But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.’

—Luke 1:13-17 (ESV)

The angel gives Zechariah amazing news - his wife will bear him a ____, to be named “John.”

The language the angel uses in vss. 16-17 would have immediately been recognizable to any ____ as the last words

from the prophetic book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament.

***The LORD of hosts:** ‘Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.’*

—Malachi 4:5-6 (ESV)

There had been no prophetic voice in Israel for ___ years, and now Zechariah is told his son will take on that role to prepare the way of the people for the coming Messiah!

Zechariah appears to have ___ because he asks for a sign.

And Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.’

—Luke 1:18 (ESV)

And the angel answered him, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.’

—Luke 1:19-20 (ESV)

Zechariah’s lack of ___ costs him, for the angel says he will now “be silent and unable to speak” until the angel’s prophecy comes to pass.

And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute.

—Luke 1:21-22 (ESV)

It must have been kind of ___ watching Zechariah emerge, unable to speak but trying to convey to the people through

“making signs” of what had happened inside.

And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ‘Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.’

—Luke 1:23-25 (ESV)

This is only the first event of a much bigger event, as in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, the same angel Gabriel appears to a young woman named Mary, betrothed to a man named Joseph, and tells her she will conceive a son through the ____, and she was to name him Jesus.

***Gabriel:** ‘And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.’*

—Luke 1:36 (ESV)

Mary left Nazareth and traveled to the Judean hill country to see her relative ____.

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.’

—Luke 1:41-45 (ESV)

And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

—Luke 1:56 (ESV)

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that

the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

—Luke 1:57-58 (ESV)

And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, 'No; he shall be called John.' And they said to her, 'None of your relatives is called by this name.' And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And they all wondered.

—Luke 1:59-63 (ESV)

Typically, a boy would be named after a grandfather or father or other family member, but when asked, Elizabeth indicates he is to be called ____, which means, “God has shown favor.”

Zechariah receives a “writing tablet” and confirms “His name is John,” and Zechariah’s affirmation of this now frees him to ____.

And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, 'What then will this child be?' For the hand of the Lord was with him.

—Luke 1:64-66 (ESV)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'The voice of one

crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

—Luke 3:1-6 (ESV)

Zechariah is probably like many of us, who ___ the promises of God that we read in the Bible, and we find it hard to imagine, in this day and time that they could come to pass.

What promise of God's am I doubting? How can I act to affirm my faith in God's promise?

Next Week: Mary