

GABRIEL: VOICE OF DISCLOSURE

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 1:5-22; 26-28..... Nathan Werner

PP#1: Luke 1:5-22, 26-28

[11] Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. [12] When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and was gripped with fear. [13] 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 give him the name 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 alcohol, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

Nathan: Luke 1:11-20 and 26-28. "Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 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 give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other alcohol, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

PP#2: Luke 1:5-22, 26-28

[16] Many of the people of Israel will he bring back 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 fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

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PP#3: Luke 1:5-22, 26-28

[18] 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 answered, "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 proper time."

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PP#4: Luke 1:5-22, 26-28

[26] In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, [27] to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. [28] The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

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PP#5: The Voices of Christmas

Gabriel: The Voice of Disclosure

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." - Matthew 1:20-21

GABRIEL SPEAKS:

"Don't be afraid."

That's how I usually start my conversations with humans.

How about you? Are you all right? For some reason, whenever I make an appearance, people seem to fall down. They can't talk. They become terrified.

We are trained to respond to that kind of reaction, and first thing is to reassure our human clients to not be afraid.

PP#6: *Image of Gabriel in heavenly glory*

I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God. Yes, near the center of the consuming fire. The overpowering glory of His presence would burn the best among you to a crisp in an instant, unless you were specially prepared to bear it. And the faintest trailing wisps of His glory that cling to my garments have made the most powerful soldiers melt with terror on some of my visits to earth.

PP#7: *Image of Gabriel appearing to Daniel*

I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God . . . and from time to time, I stand in the presence of humans. I bring messages. That's what the word "angel" means—messenger. For instance, I was the one who told Daniel the meaning of King Belshazzar's vision of the ram and the male goat. Daniel fell on his face when he saw me. Out cold.

I have been called upon to deliver many momentous messages, but none can compare with the ones I delivered for the first Christmas.

I traveled to earth three different times in connection with the events leading up to that first Christmas. I am the voice of disclosure. I was the one who disclosed the good news first to Mary and then to Joseph. And before that, I disclosed to old Zacharias the priest what part he and Elisabeth would play. All three missions came within months of each other.

PP#8: *Image of Gabriel appearing to Zacharias*

I was sent to Zacharias not quite a year before that first Christmas. He was a very godly man, an aging priest who served my Master with distinction. His wife Elisabeth was also very godly. Both of them were getting up in years. They had no children and that was a heavy sorrow for them. But my message would change all that. I am the voice of disclosure, and what I had to disclose to this dear old couple would change their lives forever.

Yahweh, God Almighty, sent me to tell Zacharias that soon he and Elisabeth would have a son. Not just any son—their son would be filled with the Holy Spirit from Elisabeth's womb. Their son was to be the promised forerunner of the Messiah. Their son would prepare Messiah's way in the spirit and power of Elijah.

I flew to Jerusalem. I found Zacharias in the temple, all alone in the holy place, burning incense. I stood just to the south of the altar of incense and watched the old man. Zacharias was intent in his work. Finally, he looked my way and saw me. You should have seen the look on his face.

PP#9: *A different image of Gabriel appearing to Zacharias*

"Don't be afraid, Zacharias," I started with the standard reassurance. "Yahweh has heard your prayers, and He is pleased to answer them. You will become a father. Your wife Elisabeth will bear a son, and together you will name him John."

I never know what kind of response to expect.

This was news of great hope, but the old priest didn't believe me. He said he and his wife were too old. So, I gave him my credentials. "I am Gabriel," I said. "I stand in the presence of God." But still Zacharias did not believe.

So raised my voice again in disclosure. This time I told Zacharias that because he did not believe Yehweh, he would not be able to speak until he saw for himself all the things I told him.

Then I left him. What a sad irony—that Zacharias the priest, who had received great good news, could not tell it to anyone because of his own doubt.

The first of my three missions was complete. Just six months later Yehweh sent me on my second mission as the voice of disclosure. This time my destination wasn't the capital city or the gleaming temple, but the village of Nazareth on the southern edge of Galilee.

PP#10: *Image of Gabriel appearing to Mary*

"Nazareth?" you ask. "That sleepy little village so far removed from the centers of government and religion? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

I understand your surprise. But there was no mistake. My contact person was a young woman, a virgin named Mary.

I found her in her parents' home, one of the humble little dwellings of Nazareth. I said, "Be happy, Mary. You are one of the most blessed women on earth." Of course, Mary was startled and afraid, but not like Zacharias or even Daniel. Mary seemed less afraid of me than she was puzzled by what I said in my greeting. What did I mean that she was the most blessed woman on earth?

"Don't be afraid, Mary," I continued. "You have found favor with God." That seemed to calm her. I disclosed that she would conceive and bear a son, and that her son's name should be called Jesus. What could I tell her in a handful of words about the birth of God among men? I said that her

baby would be great and be called the Son of the Highest. Yehweh would give her son the throne of His father David, and there would be no end to His reign.

PP#11: *Another image of Gabriel appearing to Mary*

I paused. She was quiet for a moment. Then she raised a modest question. She was not yet married and wondered how she could become pregnant. She knew well the laws of Yehweh for celibacy outside of marriage.

Details, details. How do you explain a miracle?

I did my best. I disclosed that the Holy Spirit would come over her in such a way that she would become pregnant. Therefore, the One born from her would be both God and man. I then told her about how her aged cousin Elisabeth was already in the sixth month of her pregnancy. She wouldn't be the only one with a miracle birth. Nothing is impossible with God.

Mary believed God. I remember her beautiful words, "Behold, the handmaiden of the Lord." She calmly and graciously accepted the will of God for her.

My second mission accomplished, I had just one more disclosure to make. You see, Joseph, Mary's husband-to-be would need some divine clarification.

PP#12: *Image of Gabriel appearing to Joseph*

Some months passed. Mary had gone to visit Elisabeth in the hill country for a few months, and when she returned to Nazareth, it was obvious to all that she was pregnant. Small-town gossip soon filled Nazareth. Joseph was Mary's fiancé, and he was the subject of much unjust speculation. He had painful questions of his own. My mission was to let Joseph know that Mary was telling the truth, that she had not been unfaithful to him in any way, and that it was both legitimate and acceptable for him to proceed with his marriage plans. So once more, I raised my voice of disclosure. I appeared to Joseph in a dream.

PP#13: *Another image of Gabriel appearing to Joseph*

I said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid. Your beloved Mary is pregnant, but she has not been unfaithful to you. What has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit of God. She will bear a son. When He is born, you will take Him as your own son and give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." In Isaiah's day, the outcome of the story had been guaranteed with the words, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel." Joseph would have to endure temporary local gossip in Nazareth, but that would never compare to the lasting joy of playing the role he was given in the salvation story of the world.

My third mission was complete.

PP#14: *A different image of Gabriel*

Of the twelve voices of Christmas, I was the first to speak. It was my voice that disclosed Christmas was coming. Three momentous messages from heaven. Not causes for fear, but reasons for hope.

I am the voice of disclosure again today to you. Christmas is coming. Are you ready for God

to show up? Are you ready for God to break into your life? What do you believe about Christmas? What really happened? What does it mean? I will tell you this: it changes your life! You need to get ready. Over the next few weeks, you will hear from other voices. Each will share with you something very important about Christmas. They are voices you need to hear.

So, prepare the way. A son is born to the throne of David, and He will save His people from their sins.

I am away!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR NOV. 22, 2015

Christmas Series: “The Voices of Christmas”

Sermon #1: “Gabriel: The Voice of Disclosure”

Opening prayer

Introductions: Introduce yourself & share a time when experienced a miracle.

Context: Skim Luke 1:1-10. What is going on in this chapter?

Read: Luke 1:11-20

1. Verse 11. Explain why Zechariah was in the temple, and what he was doing there.
2. Verse 12. What was Zechariah’s reaction to seeing an angel. What do you think real angels look like? What would your reaction be to seeing one?
3. Verse 13. What was Zechariah’s prayer that has been heard? Has God ever made old people able to bear children before?
4. Verse 15. Look up Numbers 6:1-21. What are the rules of a Nazarite?
5. Verses 16-17. What do you think Verses 16-17 mean about Zecharia’s son? What would be his ministry? What might that look like?
6. Verse 19-20. Why do you think the angel was so hard on Zechariah? Is this fair, do you think?

Read Luke 1:26-28.

7. Verse 26-27. What was the angel’s second mission of announcement?

8. Verse 28. Why is Mary so favored?

Read Matthew 1:20-21

9. What is the angel’s third mission of announcement? Why was it necessary, do you think?

10. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?