



St. James Presbyterian Church

A ministry of the Presbyterian Church USA

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SERMON STUDY & DISCUSSION OUTLINE

12.05.2021 – Christmas Story Life Lessons #1 – From Zechariah & Elizabeth and Joseph & Mary

Luke 1:11-66 and Matthew 1:18-24

God called and used couples Zechariah-Elizabeth and Joseph-Mary for unique reasons leading to the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, respectively. They were chosen by God in very special ways. For us ordinary people, though in many ways just like them too, what can we learn from their situations? The challenge for us this Christmas season as we reflect on the birth of our Savior is “because we are not Zechariah-Elizabeth or Joseph-Mary, what’s for me?” What lessons do their stories show you and me?

Lessons from Zechariah and Elizabeth

- *Both loved and served God. (Are we doing the same?)*
- *They so desired and prayed to God to give them a child.*
- *At first, Zechariah did not believe the angel. Reason: their old age.*
- *Good thing Elizabeth believed!*
- *In the end, God showed favor to them. For that, they believed and praised even more.*
- *When you and I pray to God for anything so dearly, what do we believe?*

Lessons from Joseph and Mary

- *Hard to imagine if you were a teenage person like Mary and something like a totally life-changing and God-given situation comes to you. Like getting pregnant miraculously by the Holy Spirit and giving birth and life to the Son of God! How would you react??*
- *Though at first terrified at what she heard from the angel, teenage Mary believed, trusted, and humbly submitted her life to God. Can you and I do the same??*
- *Joseph on the other hand, at first thought of doing things by the book. But as a righteous and godly man, he decided not to put Mary to serious public disgrace. He realized what he was told in the dream was truly from God. He relented, did not question, and followed God’s will. Equally unexpected for a man whose first thought is follow the rules!*
- *In the end, both Joseph and Mary experienced the favor and peace of God for their submission.*

Lessons from Zechariah & Elizabeth and Joseph & Mary

- *When God calls any of us to do His will, He will enable and give us favor.*
- *God knows we have our own reasons not to believe at first. He deals with our unique reasons in different and effective ways. He will not force us. But we will eventually see the wisdom of His will.*
- *For these two couples, they obeyed, praised and believed God even more!*
- *God’s purpose was fulfilled through them who turned willing to follow.*

Our usual response... But I’m not like them. Things happened in my life already. Mostly not good things. Can God still use me for His purposes? What must I believe and do? (Romans 8:28-30)