

Theme: Believing the “good news” isn’t always easy – even for those who love and serve Him. But God keeps His Word, *therefore we may be certain* of His promises.

Background and Introduction:

A “Once in a Lifetime” experience?
Zechariah serves in the Holy Place.

I. The Prayers of the Righteous

A. Meet Zechariah and Elizabeth.

1. *Both* of the priestly line – special blessing
2. Sadness – no children
 - Seen by many as a sign of God’s displeasure
 - Still glorifying God, still walking in righteousness

B. Zechariah was a man of prayer.

1. Prayer for a child
2. Prayer for God’s deliverance for Israel

C. Prayers of the people outside

NOTE: It is still “prayer” that leads to spiritual encounter with the living God!

II. Gabriel’s Good News - the Gospel!

A. For Zechariah and Elizabeth.

1. They will have a child
2. He will be “great before the Lord” v.14
 - Set apart (no wine/strong drink)
 - Born to barren woman? (Luke 7:28)
 - Filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb.
3. The promised prophet of Malachi 3 & 4
 - a. His *son* would be the forerunner to the Messiah?
 - b. The ministry of the prophet
 - Calling His people to repentance! **v.16, 17**
 - Calling them to reconciliation with one another
 - Calling them to pursue justice!
4. This is “good news” (gospel)
 - a. For Zechariah and Elizabeth – the child for which they prayed
 - b. For the nation of Israel, and the world!

III. The Faith of the Righteous

A. *Hearing* it is one thing.

B. Believing it is another

1. Very modern problem - Reject the supernatural!

2. Looked at himself and his circumstances
- Concludes? *One of us is dreaming!*

C. Even the righteous doubt

1. Zechariah found this hard to believe
- Can you say you haven't done the same thing?

NOTE: Praise God- *His* faithfulness isn't dependent on my faithfulness.

2. He wanted proof!
- God gives him a "sign".

IV. God of His Word

A. Zechariah's is silent! His mouth is *shut*.

1. A *big* lesson for Zechariah!

2. A *big* pointer for us.
- Do we trust God when he speaks??
- God will fulfill his promises!

B. E's womb *opened!*
- She believed God
- Her reproach is "taken away"

V. The Hope of the Righteous

1. Living in God's timing – not ours

2. Do not underestimate the power and place of prayer!

3. When we doubt – look to what God has done! And pray.
Mark 9:24 "I believe, help my unbelief."

4. We will find assurance and certainty in the Word and work of God.
- Here is Good News - God is faithful to His Word!
- Of this you can be sure!