

Waiting On a Promise

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*Do not be afraid,
Zechariah; your
prayer has been
heard. Your wife
Elizabeth will bear
you a son, and you
are to call him John.*

LUKE 1:13

The Old Testament concludes with a promise of one who would reconcile the hearts of fathers to their children. Those words ending the book of Malachi echoed over centuries of silence. In the period of waiting between the Old and New Testaments, our Mighty God was setting up the tumultuous world stage for the coming of the Prince of Peace.

There is a time for everything, and Luke 1 is an intricate tapestry of divine appointments. The setting was an appointed time in history: during the reign of Herod. Zechariah was appointed for a once-in-a-lifetime priestly duty. Elizabeth's long years of infertility were an appointed impossible situation that set up the miraculous conception of John the Baptist. The couple's priestly lineage was an

appointed heritage for raising an anointed son. And Gabriel was the appointed messenger to announce God's appointed purpose for John the Baptist.

When they were young and starting out their life together, Zechariah and Elizabeth were likely full of hopeful expectations about their future. But as infertile months turned into years, the hope of having a child ebbed away and felt like a burden of "disgrace" (Luke 1:25).

When we're introduced to this couple, they're now "very old" yet are continuing to walk with God. This *faithfulness* deserves our commendation—rather than criticism of Zechariah's moment of unbelief. After all, this aged man had grown so familiar with disappointment.

Zechariah had persevered in prayer through seemingly dark and silent years. But on this day, as he performed the priestly duty of lighting the fire to burn incense, Gabriel appeared and announced that God had heard his prayer. God was *with* Zechariah—even when heaven seemed silent. The Light of the World had not forgotten; he was sovereignly preparing history for the appointed time.

Zechariah and Elizabeth's story offers us perspective on our own seasons of waiting. We're reminded that there's no expiration date on our prayers. The faithfulness of this couple unfolded into a life-giving season

of joy as God's promise came to fulfillment through their child, the forerunner of the Messiah.

But as we enter into their story, there is also no skipping over their decades of infertility. We enter into this painful part of their lives too. For in their long sorrow, we see their strong faith.

Elizabeth understood that in this miracle, God had shown her special favor. Many biblical heroes did not receive what they hoped for or what had been promised them this side of eternity (Heb. 11:39). The ultimate fulfillment of their faith was beyond them—as it also is for us. This Advent, in our waiting, there is a bigger picture being painted—in God's appointed time. Immanuel—God with us—is still faithful to his promises today.

Reflect on Luke 1:5–25.

How do you see faithfulness in this story? Zechariah and Elizabeth's faithfulness? God's? How do you see God's sovereignty? God's presence?