



## SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS for the week of November 27, 2022

“What Are You Waiting For?”

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### **Theme/concept**

God does some of his best work in us while we wait. Throughout the Old Testament, the people of God waited for the Messiah—the one they believed would restore Israel’s fortunes, deliver them from their enemies, and bring God’s salvation in ways that would bless the entire world. We will look at the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and what God did in their lives as they waited for their son John to be born. We will see that waiting isn’t a sign of God’s absence, but an assurance of his presence.

### **Application**

In the real issues of life, we’re not just waiting around; we are waiting on God. We can trust his wisdom and his timing.

### **Icebreaker (for groups)**

In what situation do you find waiting most frustrating?

### **Reflections on the sermon**

What did you learn from the sermon about why God allows us to wait and what he does within us while we wait?

### **Scripture**

#### **Malachi 3:1 (New International Version)**

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

#### **Malachi 4:5-6 (NIV)**

“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. <sup>6</sup> He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”

### **Luke 1:1-25 (NIV)**

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled<sup>[a]</sup> among us,<sup>2</sup> just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.<sup>3</sup> With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,<sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

<sup>5</sup> In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.<sup>6</sup> Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly.<sup>7</sup> But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

<sup>8</sup> Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,<sup>9</sup> he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.<sup>10</sup> And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

<sup>11</sup> Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.<sup>12</sup> When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.<sup>13</sup> 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 call him John.<sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,<sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.<sup>16</sup> He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.<sup>17</sup> And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

<sup>19</sup> The angel said to him, "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.<sup>20</sup> 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 appointed time."

<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple.<sup>22</sup> When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

<sup>23</sup> When his time of service was completed, he returned home.<sup>24</sup> After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.<sup>25</sup> "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

### **Reviewing the Scripture**

1. What did you learn from Luke 1:5-7 about the background and character of Zechariah and Elizabeth?

2. What special function is Zechariah chosen to perform in the temple (Luke 1:8-9)? Why was his selection such a high honor?

3. What does Zechariah see as he performs his priestly duties (Luke 1:8-12)? What is his reaction?
4. What good news does Zechariah receive in Luke 1:13-14?
5. What will be John's role in God's redemptive plan (Luke 1:14-17)? How do we see that his status and mission are divinely ordained?
6. What does Luke tell us about the presence of the Holy Spirit within John (Luke 1:15)?
7. How does Luke 1:17 echo the language of Malachi 4:6?
8. What is it about Zechariah's response that causes Gabriel to conclude that Zechariah does not believe the angel's words? (Luke 1:18)

9. What do the people conclude after Zechariah comes out of the temple? Why? (Luke 1:21-22)

**Going deeper**

1. Why do you think Luke emphasizes Zechariah and Elizabeth's outstanding moral character in Luke 1:6?
2. How would you have felt if you were Zechariah and the angel appeared to you? Are you open to the Lord doing something in your life that you consider impossible or are you more limited in your expectations? Why?
3. Why do you believe that Zechariah is rendered unable to speak? Do you think that Zechariah is being punished or do you think that God has something else in mind? What?
4. What are at least three ways that Luke 1:5-25 shows us that Zechariah and Elizabeth waited? How does God use those periods of waiting for his purposes?



9. Where do you see echoes of the Old Testament in Luke 1:5-25? How might this indicate that Zechariah and Elizabeth's waiting is intertwined with Israel's long-awaited redemption?

**Closing prayer**

Dear Lord, we know that you love us because you sent your son to die upon the cross for our sins. You have also provided for each of us in so many ways, and we thank you for your care. Despite our knowledge of your love and our recognition that you are the Creator of the universe, we think we have the best of plans and we have our own time schedule. Please forgive us and help us wait for your will to be done. While we wait, please grow us in our faith and help us learn all you want us to learn along the way. Help us to trust your wisdom and timing, and especially Lord, please assure us of your presence while we wait through times that are difficult and often painful. In Jesus' name, amen