

The CALL of CHRISTMAS

Small Group Notes
#1 Zachariah
Rev. Joshua Sklar
Sunday Nov.27, 2016

Everywhere we look people are preparing for December 25. The malls and stores are decked out with ribbons and bows, presents are under the tree, and “in the air there is feeling of Christmas.” Yet, for so many folks out there, they are not actually preparing for the true meaning of Christmas; the advent of Jesus the Christ. As we move through the coming weeks before Christmas, may we do so with a focus on the greatest gift of all, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords!

Today in our small group we are going to take a look at what happens to people who are gloriously interrupted by God. It is the same person, Zachariah, (and his wife Elizabeth) that Josh spoke about on Sunday but now it is 9 months later. So, open your Bibles to the book of Luke and let's get started with a few discussion questions.

1. Thinking back to Sunday's message, have you ever been guilty of living a life of “passive doubt?”
2. How did God break into your life and get your attention?
Did it build your faith in God and if so, how?
3. How are Zachariah and Elizabeth described in Luke 1:5-6?
4. In Luke 1:41, Mary visits Elizabeth and Zachariah. What is the response of her son, John who is still in the womb? What is Elizabeth's response?
5. In verse 57, the time has come for Elizabeth to give birth. Why do her friends and neighbours think that it is “great mercy” from God for her to have a child?
(verse 58 – here is a hint – the name John means “God is gracious”)
6. The friends and family want to name him after Zachariah, as was the custom but Elizabeth says the name is John. They turn to the mute Zachariah and ask him. He affirms the name on a tablet. When he does, his tongue is “loosed”.
 - a. How does their obedience impact others?
 - b. Compare this to the start of the church in Acts 1:42-43. Do you think that the church in general has lost that today? Why or why not?
7. What is his immediate response to the work of God in his life? (verse 64).
What does it look like for us to have the same response?
8. How has their encounter with God changed their lives?

In what ways have they moved from religion to relationship?

9. Zachariah gives praise to God and then prophesies over his son.
 - a. Who is the initial focus of his prophecy? (verses 68-75)
 - b. How does he describe Jesus?
 - c. Compare his response and the way he speaks to the angel Gabriel in verse 18 with how he speaks now. How is it different?
 - d. His final words are about John and he clearly defines John's purpose. How is our purpose like John's and what are we called to do?
10. How can we help to give people "the knowledge of their salvation?" (verse 77)
11. What does it look like for us to shine the light of Jesus?

CHRISTMAS AT ALL NATIONS

HERE ARE A FEW OPPORTUNITIES THAT WE HAVE TO SHINE THE LIGHT OF JESUS THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON.

1. We were able to drop off a total of 211 Hats, 248 sets of Mittens and 36 scarves for the students at Queen Elizabeth II Public School. **Thank you!**
2. BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS: All 38 teenagers have been taken chosen by individuals, families or small groups...**THANK YOU!!!!** Gifts are due back to the church by this coming Sunday Dec. 4th!
3. THE GREAT CHRISTMAS OFFERING. This year we are:
 - Helping create a safe place for the homeless through The NOAH Community Hub.
 - Supporting the Louis Street association after school homework club for kids in that area.
 - Providing the Living Nativity free of charge to all who attend
 - Sponsoring our magnificent Christmas Gala and reception

Every one of these events has the potential to change lives. Your sacrifice could change the eternal destiny of and adult or a child. Please give generously.

CONCERTS:

Wednesday NOVEMBER 30th 7 p.m., **THE ENNIS SISTERS** national Christmas Tour comes to ANC. Down East folk and Celtic music at its best.
Tickets at the Giving Centre (\$25.00 cash only)

Sunday DECEMBER 5th 7:30 p.m. the **HEART AND SOUL** 21st Annual Christmas Concert. Whether singing accompanied or a capella, this fourteen member vocal group has a song repertoire ranging from sacred to secular, classical to contemporary, including jazz, pop, rock & folk. They will be joined this year by guest musicians Iona Reed (piano) and Jack Brompton (percussion) and others. Heart & Soul is raising funds this year for The China Hand Drum Project at the Shepherd's Field Vocational Center in China. General admission \$15.

Sunday morning 10 am DECEMBER 18th **THE CHRISTMAS GALA**: invite your friends, a free gift to our community with a reception to follow.
(**SIGN UP on Sunday at the Welcome Centre to bring 'ready to serve' pickup refreshments!)

DECEMBER 20-24th 7:30 each night **LIVING NATIVITY** outside at Science North

Sunday DECEMBER 25th 10 am Our **ANNUAL FAMILY CHRISTMAS SERVICE**.