

The Kids Are Coming

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 December 2024

Preacher: Johnny Wong

[0:00] Good morning, everybody. It's great to see everybody. Thanks, JP. Thanks, James, for the intro. And we're talking about Advent today. And it's great. Like, you're waiting all year to hear the Christmas music, Christmas carols all again. And December is the start of that. Can you just tell me?

All right. So JP just read for us the start of the book of Luke. Now, who is Luke? Luke was a companion of the Apostle Paul. And in fact, he was a doctor. Any doctors in the house? Any doctors? Okay, we're not going to get saved.

He was a doctor. And so he was a man of science. He was a man of research. And also, in fact, he was a Gentile. He was a Gentile. He was not a Jew. And it's interesting because God used a Gentile to write a book concerning the person of Jesus Christ.

So firstly, we see his story. Luke's story is that he's a doctor. And the purpose that he is writing is that he's to give an account of Jesus so that we have assurance. We can have assurance of who Jesus is and what he did. And his method is that he would give an orderly account with details about his ministry.

What's interesting about Luke's gospel is that it is one that is focused on God working in and through Gentiles, in and through children, women, social outcasts.

[1:48] Luke's focus is on sharing the good news, the good news of the gospel. Another thing that is special about the book of Luke is that it focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Holy Spirit.

So we talked about this at GU on Friday as well. But I just wanted to reiterate, who is the Holy Spirit? Who is the Holy Spirit? Some of us think, oh, the Holy Spirit, we think of, you know, like Star Wars. It's a force that we can like gain and we can push things and read people's minds or, you know, alter their egos or whatever.

The Holy Spirit is not a force. It's not like just the wind or air. It's not like gravity. No, the Holy Spirit is a person. It is a conscious deity. In fact, it is the third person of the Trinity with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Spirit. The Son, the Spirit is not the Father. But all three are God at the same time. The Holy Spirit is conscious. He has his work and he's working in unity and under the submission of the Father, the authority of the Father to go out and accomplish the things the Father has commanded.

And also, the Father works in unison. We see in the beginning that the Father initiated the world and the Spirit was hovering over the waters of the world in creation.

[3:37] In the Old Testament, it is interesting. The Holy Spirit appears to certain people at certain times for a specific purpose.

For example, Joseph, he gave him wisdom. The Spirit of God came upon Joseph and equipped him and gave him leadership.

There was a guy who created, who made the Ark of the Covenant and designed the tabernacle. The Spirit of the Lord descended upon him. The Spirit of the Lord descended upon Moses and the leaders.

The Spirit of the Lord went upon Joshua and gave him leadership and courage. The Spirit of the Lord gave Samson his strength. The Spirit of the Lord allowed Saul to prophesy to certain people, his people.

The Spirit of the Lord was upon David in his anointing. The Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament.

[4:49] But there was a period after some of the prophets wrote down different prophecies about the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of Israel.

There was a period where the Holy Spirit didn't appear for more than 400 years. Around 400 years. Where was the Holy Spirit in this 400 years?

He was waiting. He was waiting for a specific time. Advent means coming. Who's coming? Jesus is coming.

And that is why the Holy Spirit starts to appear. Now, JP read for us the story of Zachariah and Elizabeth. Zachariah, his name means Yahweh has remembered.

Yahweh has remembered. Elizabeth means God is my fortune. God is my fortune. Now, we see Zachariah and Elizabeth both were of the lineage of Aaron.

[6:01] They were priests. And priests served in the temple. And the Bible specifically, Luke specifically says here that not only were they priests, there's instances of priests that didn't really follow God's law.

But these priests, Zachariah and Elizabeth, they were righteous. They knew the word of the Lord. They knew the commands and the laws. And they followed. Now, you would think these priests, they serve the Lord.

They're righteous. They would be blessed by the Lord. They should have children. God would bless them, right? But in the Old Testament, if you were barren, what was it a sign of?

What did people think of barren women? They might have sinned. They might have done something wrong. So you see how it is confusing.

On one hand, they're a priesthood. They're part of the priesthood. On one hand, they are righteous. They follow the law. But on the other hand, they're barren. How could that be?

[7:11] Isn't God supposed to bless people who serve him, who are righteous? And we see these different stories in the Old Testament. Who are the different stories in the Old Testament of barren women?

Who are they? Abraham and Sarah. They were old. But yet God promised him. He saw the stars. Your descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

How could this be? I'm old. An angel appears and says, you will be with child. And Sarah laughed. How could this be?

Rachel. Rachel couldn't have children either. And later, she was blessed with Joseph and Benjamin.

Hannah. Hannah cried out to the Lord. God. God. My other husband's wife has kids, but I don't have a kid. But if you give me a kid, I will devote this kid to you.

[8:18] And Samuel. Came through this prayer. Samuel came through this prayer. So we have Zachariah.

Righteous. Priest. But barren. Him and his wife are barren. And we hear that Zachariah was chosen to go into the temple.

Now, the temple had, maybe we can show a map of the temple here. So there was an outer courtyard where the altar was.

And they would bring, people would bring sacrifices, especially on celebrations. A lamb or a goat without blemish. And it would be slaughtered and the blood would be shed. However, there were special moments or special days like the day of atonement.

Where priests would be selected to go into the holy place. And the incense would be burned in the morning and in the evening.

[9:25] So the priest would enter through the door. And there were in the middle is the altar of incense. The altar of incense. During those days, there were around 20,000 priests.

That's pretty good. Right? That's a lot of priests. Imagine 20,000 pastors in Hong Kong. That's pretty great. Right? That would be like, wow. Now, it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to go in, to be selected by lot, to go into the holy place to burn incense.

It was a privilege. It was a great privilege. Because imagine God is in the temple.

They believed it. They knew it, that God was in the temple. And you have the opportunity to go into the holy place to burn incense.

It was an amazing privilege. Amazing privilege. And so, Zachariah was chosen at this moment to go into the holy place.

[10:45] And to burn incense at the altar. When you burn incense, the pleasing aroma arises.

And it symbolizes, we can see in the next slide, an example of a priest burning incense. And the pleasing aroma would go up, just like the prayers of the Israelites would go up.

And it would be pleasing to the Lord. The prayers of Israel are like incense being burned. And the aroma is pleasing to the Lord.

Now imagine you are Zachariah, and you had this once in a lifetime opportunity to go into the holy of holies. To be in the presence of the Lord.

And in the altar of incense to pray and communicate with the Lord. What would you pray for?

[11:57] What would you pray for? What would you be praying for? Good university. Good family. Zachariah prayed for children.

Because what happened when he entered the holy place? The angel of the Lord appeared and was standing at his right side. Usually when you stand at the right side of something, it means, you know, you are, you have the power or authority of that person.

You know, Jesus stands at the right hand of God. It means this message is, is, is very important.

And it's from the Lord. And when Zachariah saw him, he was startled.

He was startled. Now, of course, angelic beings. It's hard for us to imagine what angelic beings look like, right?

Nowadays, we imagine, um, cupids with little wings floating. And it's so cute. Right? Like on Valentine's day. But no, the, the prophet Isaiah describes them as six winged beings flying around on God's thrones with many eyes.

[13:14] Okay. I don't know if you, you can Google the photos later, but sure of them are a group of four angels with four faces. Imagine four faces with wings or.

And a winged figure with lots of eyes. Now, Daniel describes Gabriel as a man of God, a strength of God, which means, sorry, man of God or strength of God.

So Daniel describes him as a man, like he sees a manly figure that the angel Gabriel appears to him and Zachariah is afraid.

And he announces to Zachariah that he is going to have a child. He's going to have a child. Your prayers.

What does it say there? It says, your wife, Elizabeth will bear a son.

[14:18] Your prayer has been heard. God has heard his prayer. God has heard his prayer. And he describes John the Baptist.

John the Baptist will be a joy. This baby will be a joy. This person will grow to become a joy. He will be great. Wow. Imagine you having a child.

And the angel said, your child's going to be great. Right? Like that's every parent's dream. Right? To have a great child. Like who would you describe as a great?

Right? Like an athlete would be Michael Jordan or Tom Brady or Einstein. These guys are great. John the Baptist. John the Baptist, the angel describes him as great.

He's going to be great. And not only is he going to be great, he's going to be consecrated for the Lord. There's going to be, that's why he's going to be without wine or drink.

[15:22] In the Old Testament, Samson had the Nazarite vow. He was consecrated to be a leader of Israel.

Samuel was without drink because he was dedicated to the Lord. John the Baptist would be dedicated to the Lord and he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth.

The Holy Spirit has awoken after 400 years to fill John the Baptist in the womb.

Why did he fill him? To fulfill his purpose. The Old Testament had a prophecy that someone would go before the Messiah to prepare the way of the Lord.

And that is what the angel is claiming. That the Holy Spirit will be inside John to do the work of the Holy Spirit. To call people to repentance.

[16:27] To call Israel to repentance. And to prepare the way for the Messiah. Now imagine, you know, you're holding an octopus card.

And you can take a bus, \$2 everywhere in Hong Kong. How confident would you be if an angel appeared to you and said, you are going to be with child?

Probably not very confident. And Zachariah wasn't confident. He was like, how could this be?

Right? I'm an old man. My wife's an old woman.

Like, there's no way that we could be with child. And Gabriel's answer is very interesting. Zachariah says, I am an old man.

Gabriel says, I am Gabriel. I am Gabriel. I stand at the presence of the Lord. And I give the command.

[17:29] The commands of the Lord. And because of Zachariah's doubt. Because of Zachariah's doubt. He was muted.

He was muted. And so we have the story of Zachariah and Elizabeth. The Holy Spirit is awakened. And is inside.

Inside. The baby John. John the Baptist. The spirit is working. In this old couple.

To accomplish his purposes. And to fulfill. His prophecies. The next story we have. Is of.

A virgin couple. So we have a childless old couple. And now we have a virgin couple. And. So engagement. Is that there is a formal agreement.

[18:27] By the fathers. Back then. A lot of times. They had. An arranged marriage. Some sort of arrangement. All right. And so there was an arrangement.

Hey. I got this girl. Her name is Mary. She's great. And. And. I see your boy. Joseph.

Let's have an engagement. An agreement. And then there was a pledge. This pledge is a ceremony. Where both. Parties. Had mutual promises.

That were made. Okay. So there's the engagement. And there is the pledge. And a year later. There would be. The marriage. And so here is. Mary.

Mary. And Mary. Mary has been. Pledged. To be married. To Joseph. Okay. He's not. She's not married yet. So they have not had.

[19:24] Any. Sexual. Relationships. She is in fact. A virgin. And the angel. Appears to her. And. And commends her.

And says. You are highly favored. The Lord is with you. You are blessed. Christ. Mary. Mary. Is righteous. A virgin.

She's highly favored. By the Lord. And she. Is given this promise. That Jesus. Would be.

Her child. He would also be great. He will also be great. He will be the son of the most high. He will have this amazing name. This amazing title.

As the son of the most high. He has the throne of David. His lineage. Is of kingship. His reign. Is over Jacob's descendants.

[20:19] That's his nation. That's his country. And his kingdom. Shall reign. Forever. He has dominion. Jesus is promised. And announced.

To Mary. So we have two. Couples. Both are righteous. In the eyes of the Lord. One was. Old. And barren. The other. Virgin. Without. Any. Sexual. Relationship. And so obviously. Mary is curious.

How could this be? I'm a virgin. I. Have not been. With any man. And the Holy Spirit. Sorry. Gabriel says. That the Holy Spirit.

Will come upon you. And he will. And the power of the most high. Will over. Shadow. You. The Holy Spirit. Will come. On you.

[21:17] And over. Shadow. You. This word. Overshadow. Was also used. In the Old Testament. When the Israelites. Were in.

The desert. The. The. The. The. The pillar of cloud. Symbolized. The presence. Of God. Among. The Israelite people. During the transfiguration. The cloud. Overshadowed. The transfiguration. As a symbol.

That God's presence. Was there. The Holy Spirit. Is the one. That gives life. In creation.

The spirit. Was hovering. Over the waters. And he was. An active. Part. Of creation. The creation process.

[22:13] And here. Once again. In the story. Of Elizabeth. And the story. Of Mary. The Holy Spirit. Is active. In creating life. Both instances. The Holy Spirit. Is the giver. Of life.

He hovers. Over the waters. Of creation. And he hovers. Over the waters. Of the new birth. And Mary's response. I.

Am. The Lord's servant. I am. The Lord's servant. She. Surrenders. Herself. And says. I am willing. To do whatever.

The Lord. Has called me to. How old. Do you think she was? How old. Do you think she was? Like 20. 20. I don't know.

[23:13] Don't know. How old are you? 17. 17. 17. Do you think Mary. Would be younger. Than her. Would be. Yes. She's in disbelief.

She's just like. Imagine. A young girl. Younger than 17. Mary. An angel appears. Gives this amazing.

Announcement. That you are going to have a child. And it's going to be. Not just any child. It's going to be the Messiah. And Mary. Surrenders to the Lord. And says.

I am the Lord's servant. She's so young. How much experience. Does she have. In the world. Or knowledge. Not much.

But she has amazing faith. In the Lord. She's willing to step out. Unto the promises. And proclaim.

[24 : 10] And work with the promises. Of the Lord. And so we see these two couples. A childless couple. And a virgin couple.

Both were righteous. Both were righteous. One. Was barren. And one. Was without sexual relationship. A virgin.

Both had a holy announcement. Gabriel gave them. Announcement. Of a child. One with John. One. With the Messiah. Jesus. Both reacted.

And were frightened. And afraid. Who is this? Who are you? Both received God's promise. Of a child. And they questioned.

How could this be? I am old. I am. Playing music. I am a virgin. How could this be?

[25 : 05] Both were miraculous births. Because. Zachariah and Elizabeth were old. And Mary. Was a virgin. The Holy Spirit.

Worked. Actively. In both births. To proclaim. His story. To fulfill his prophecy.

Zachariah. Zachariah. Responded in doubt. And Mary. Responded in faith. There's.

Four key things. That I want to learn. From this story. And it's all related. To the Holy Spirit. And the first thing.

Is that the Holy Spirit. Illuminates. Our prayers. The Holy Spirit. Illuminates. Our prayers. You know. Go all the way. To the end. Almost. The Holy Spirit.

[26 : 04] Illuminates. Our prayers. Or he is. Interceding. For our prayers. Burning. Of the incense.

The pleasing aroma. The Lord. Hears. Our prayers. That is the symbol. As Zachariah. Was in the holy place.

The Holy Spirit. Prays. For us. With groans. It says in Romans chapter 8. The Holy Spirit. Prays for us. With groans. That cannot be expressed.

In words. And the Father. Who knows. All hearts. Knows what the Spirit. Is saying. For the Spirit. Pleads. For us believers. In harmony. With God's. Own.

Will. When we don't know. What to pray for. The Holy Spirit. Is praying. For us. With groans. You know. When your stomach growls.

[27 : 02] It's like. These groans. He's. He's. Your stomach. Is desperate. For food. The Holy Spirit. Is desperate. To pray for you. With groans.

That cannot be expressed. The inner gut. That gut feeling. The Holy Spirit. Is praying. He's interceding. On our behalf. He's illuminating.

Our. Illuminating. Our prayers. To pray in accordance. With his. Father's will. With the Father's will. My.

My father. Came to know Jesus. In high school. In high school. And. My parents were. You know. Like the olden days. They believed in everything.

Right. Whatever. Somebody said. Would work. They would pray to. Right. Pray to the east. Pray to the west. Pray to the rock. My grandparents. Were like that. But then. My father.

[27 : 57] Found Jesus. In a Christian school. And. He was bright. He was a studious person. He was going to be an engineer. Or a doctor. Or a lawyer. Just like the Asian dream.

But then. And. My dad had a calling. A calling. To serve Jesus. For the rest of his life. And he told. My grandparents.

And my dad was furious. Like what are you doing? You're wasting your life. I'm going to kick you out of the house. And my mom was. My grandmother was pleading. On the ground. Don't go. Don't go. And yet. He decided. To follow. The Lord. And become a pastor. Go into seminary. And he became a pastor.

I was born. And we moved to Canada. My dad had been praying. For my parents. For over 14. 15 years. And finally.

[28 : 57] When they came to visit us. In Canada. In a summer camp. My grandparents. Place their faith. In the Lord Jesus Christ.

What are we praying for? What have we been praying for? For a long time. That we've given up on. The Holy Spirit.

Is interceding. On our behalf. He's illuminating us. To the prayers. And aligning our prayers. To the Father's will. The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. Understands. What you're going through. Don't give up.

Keep praying. For your friends. To know Jesus. For your parents. To know Jesus. The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit.

[29 : 56] The Holy Spirit. Is working. To fill. The Father's. Will. The Holy Spirit. Was active. And was the agent. Of the Father.

To fulfill. The prophecies. That were occurring. And he is. Not just active. Back then. He is active. Now.

He is active. Now. We're reading. The. Some of us. Are reading. The book of Daniel. And it is a confusing book. Because it. It shows a picture. Of the history. And it also shows. Imagery. Of the future. And you can. Just imagine. Daniel. As a prophet. Seeing all these things. And not understanding. Almost anything. And yet he still chooses.

To believe in God. And we. Have so much more knowledge. Now. Because of. The Messiah. And the whole Bible. But there are still. Prophecies to come.

[30 : 52] That we don't understand. Daniel. Believed. In God. Even though. He didn't understand. Everything. Can we believe. In God. Even when we don't.

Understand. The full picture yet. Can we believe. The Holy Spirit. Is working. To fulfill. The Father's will. Next one.

The Holy Spirit. Works. In all believers. In the Old Testament. It came. The Holy Spirit. Came upon people. For a specific purpose. A specific time.

A specific skill. In the New Testament. After the veil. Has been torn. Jesus has promised us. That there is a new counselor. And that new counselor. Is the Holy Spirit.

And during the day. Of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit. Descended. On people. His believers. In a room. Just like this. And they were able. To speak different languages. Of every nation.

[31 : 51] The Holy Spirit. Has descended. Upon you. In your life. If you are a believer. Of Jesus. He is our guarantee. The guarantee.

Of our faith. In God. He is the one. That will empower you. To do things. Beyond your own ability. Giving you gifts. To serve the Lord. And serve the church. And love one another.

In the New Testament. After Jesus. After Pentecost. Christ. We have. The third person. Of the Trinity.

Inside of us. The power of the Holy Spirit. Inside each one of you. You are not your own. You have the power. And the Spirit of God.

Inside of you. You are a chosen generation. You are now the priesthood. You are the believers. That are called.

[32 : 49] To prepare. For Christ's. Second coming. Just as John. Was called. And the Spirit. Worked inside of him.

To prepare the way. For Christ's first coming. We are the ones. That God. Has empowered. To prepare. For Christ's second coming.

And Jesus is coming again. Just as you see the clouds. When you see the clouds. Oh maybe rain will come. We see the signs today. We see. We see the signs today.

That there's bad weather. Going to be coming. That the end times are coming. The wars. The disasters. We don't know.

When Jesus will come again. And Jesus. Is sending. Sent us the Spirit. To help us. To prepare. For Christ's. Second. Coming. The devil.

[33 : 47] Gets us. To be complacent. Oh it doesn't matter. There's enough time. There's no sense of urgency. The devil gets us.

To stuff ourselves. With all the buffets. And gets us all stuffed up. And then binging. And then mentally stuffed up. And then brain rot. You know. So we're. Stuffed up.

Brain rot. We're just going through life. Like a. Like a zombie. But no. God has not called us. To brain rot.

Or be stuffed. No. God has called us. To prepare. The way. Of the Lord. God. We are. The John.

The Baptists. We are the new. John. The Baptist. That the Spirit. Of the Lord. Has descended upon you. And don't say you're young. Because Mary worked. Inside of. Mary.

[34 : 44] Surrendered herself. To the Lord. A teenage girl. Don't say you're young. God is. Inside of you. The Spirit of God. Is working inside of you. The Spirit of God.

Can work through you. And your friends. Don't say you're old. Because God worked. In Elizabeth. In Zachariah.

God has chosen. Each one of us. We are the new priesthood. The holy. New holy nation. And we are called. To prepare.

The way. Of the second. Coming. Let us. Pray. Comey father. We give you all. All the glory. You are the main character.

The holy spirit. Is the one. That moves. And changes lives. Lord. We pray. That we would respond. Like Mary. In surrender.

[35 : 43] For whatever. The spirit of the Lord. Is leading us. Lead us. Lord. To prepare. The way. Of the Lord.

In Christ's name. We pray. Amen. Amen.