

Afraid of Answered Prayer! [Handout]

To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known Series

Luke 1:8-25; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; September 1, 2013

¹¹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

¹² Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, “**Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard**, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. (Luke 1:11-13)

Do you pray? What are you praying for right now? What have you prayed for in the past? What is happening in your life right now? Do you think there could be any connection?

The Answered Prayer

What petition is the angel talking about (verse 13)?

Zacharias would have offered a prayer to God as he was offering the incense. It is not likely that he was praying for a personal request but rather praying for the nation, probably the redemption of Israel and the coming of the Messiah. But the angel mentions the birth of a son to him and it would seem implied that that too had been a prayer of Zacharias' as well.

The Response

How did Zacharias respond to the encounter with the angel Gabriel?

He was afraid in the beginning and unbelieving in the end (verses 12 and 18).

The Consequence

What was the consequence of Zacharias' response to this encounter?

He was mute and maybe even deaf until the birth of his son, John the Baptist. (verse 20; see also verse 62)

The Application

Don't be afraid of the circumstances God is using to answer your prayers!

Psalm 23:5; Psalm 119:75

- The Shepherds (Luke 2:10-12)

The answer to our hopes and dreams is born to lie in a feeding trough?!

- Joseph (Genesis 37:5-11, 38; 39:1, 19-20; 40:20-23; 41:38-45; 50:20)

My 'dream' is going to be fulfilled through sin and slavery and false accusation and prison and disappointment?!

- Paul (Romans 1:9-12; Acts 21:27-33; 23:23; 24:27; 27:21-26; 28:14)

My 'good desire and prayer' is going to be fulfilled through a near death experience, two years in prison, and a shipwreck?!

The Package Deal

The reality is that we like the idea that God keeps His promises and that He answers prayer but we really struggle with the 'packaging' of many of those fulfilled promises and answered prayers! God has promised through Jesus to save us from sin and to satisfy us in God and He is always at work to fulfill these promises. We are always praying, as believers, for our good and God's glory and He is always answering those prayers with the circumstances He sends our way. We must fight the temptation to define the 'present' by the 'packaging.' Whether the 'packaging' is satin red ribbon or thorns, we can rest in the reality that it is God's fulfillment of His promises to us in Christ and a means to the answer to our prayers.

The Prayer Team

Whose prayers are being answered by God through our circumstances?

- The prayers of His Son (John 17)
- The prayers of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27)
- The prayers of other believers past and present (Acts 10:31; 16:6-10; Colossians 4:3)
- The best part of your prayers (James 4:2-3; Matthew 7:9-11)

Rejoice, Thank, and Pray

So if we believe this, what should we do? 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

We should be thankful (for God's keeping His promises and answering our prayers) and hopeful (rejoicing to see how God is going use these circumstances to bring Himself the glory and us the good) and prayerful (asking God for what we need to trust and love in any 'promise-fulfilling and prayer-answering' circumstances).

Resting in His Righteousness

How we be sure this is true of us personally? 1 John 4:14-18

If we are believing in Jesus and resting in His righteousness alone, then we can rest in this glorious truth of God's perfect love and constant pursuit of our good! (Psalm 23:6)

Afraid of Answered Prayer! [Sermon Notes]

To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known Series

Luke 1:8-25; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; September 1, 2013

¹¹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

¹² Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, “**Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard**, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. (Luke 1:11-13)

Do you pray?

What are you praying for right now?

What have you prayed for in the past?

What is happening in your life right now?

Do you think there could be any connection?

- The Stranded Man, the Two Boats and the Helicopter

The Answered Prayer

What petition is the angel talking about (verse 13)?

Zacharias would have offered a prayer to God as he was offering the incense. It is not likely that he was praying for a personal request but rather praying for the nation, probably the redemption of Israel and the coming of the Messiah. But the angel mentions the birth of a son to him and it would seem implied that that too had been a prayer of Zacharias' as well.

The Response

How did Zacharias respond to the encounter with the angel Gabriel?

He was afraid in the beginning and unbelieving in the end (verses 12 and 18).

The Consequence

What was the consequence of Zacharias' response to this encounter?

He was mute and maybe even deaf until the birth of his son, John the Baptist. (verse 20; see also verse 62)

The Application

Don't be afraid of the circumstances God is using to answer your prayers!

Psalm 23:5

Psalm 119:75

Think about these other cases.

- The Shepherds (Luke 2:10-12)

The answer to our hopes and dreams is born to lie in a feeding trough?!

- Joseph (Genesis 37:5-11, 38; 39:1, 19-20; 40:20-23; 41:38-45; 50:20)

My 'dream' is going to be fulfilled through sin and slavery and false accusation and prison and disappointment?!

- Paul (Romans 1:9-12; Acts 21:27-33; 23:23; 24:27; 27:21-26; 28:14)

My 'good desire and prayer' is going to be fulfilled through a near death experience, two years in prison, and a shipwreck?!

- The Boll Weevil Monument in Enterprise Alabama (erected 1919; destroyed the cotton but paved the way for peanuts and prosperity)

The Package Deal

The reality is that we like the idea that God keeps His promises and that He answers prayer but we really struggle with the 'packaging' of many of those fulfilled promises and answered prayers!

God has promised through Jesus to save us from sin and to satisfy us in God and He is always at work to fulfill these promises.

We are always praying, as believers, for our good and God's glory and He is always answering those prayers with the circumstances He sends our way.

We must fight the temptation to define the 'present' by the 'packaging.' Whether the 'packaging' is satin red ribbon or thorns, we can rest in the reality that it is God's fulfillment of His promises to us in Christ and a means to the answer to our prayers.

- The Shipwrecked Man, the Burning Hut, and the Rescue Boat

The Prayer Team

Whose prayers are being answered by God through our circumstances?

- The prayers of His Son (John 17)
- The prayers of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27)
- The prayers of other believers past and present (Acts 10:31; 16:6-10; Colossians 4:3)

- The best part of your prayers (James 4:2-3; Matthew 7:9-11)
- Luther's Blatant but "Good" Sin in joining the Monastery

On July 17, 1505, Martin Luther entered the monastery in Erfurt, Germany to become an Augustinian monk in the Roman Catholic church. He later said this choice was a flagrant sin – "not worth a farthing" because it was made against his father and out of fear. Then he added "*But how much good the merciful Lord has allowed to come of it!*" (Piper quoting)

We must not think that perfect love does not lie behind our experience of life in a fallen world and therefore, our experience of sin – ours and others – to one degree or another. Think of the sin against Joseph, Paul and Jesus and how all of these involved God keeping His promises and answering the heart's desire and prayers of His people.

Rejoice, Thank, and Pray

So if we believe this, what should we do?

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

We should be thankful (for God's keeping His promises and answering our prayers) and hopeful (rejoicing to see how God is going use these circumstances to bring Himself the glory and us the good) and prayerful (asking God for what we need to trust and love in any 'promise-fulfilling and prayer-answering' circumstances).

- Corrie ten Boom and her sister were in a concentration camp in WWII. The barracks they lived in were filled with bugs. Corrie's sister said they must thank God for the bugs. At first she refused. But she soon realized they were a blessing. The soldiers would not come into the barracks because of the bugs. Thanking God in trust is what the gospel calls us to in time of trial.

Resting in His Righteousness

How we be sure this is true of us personally?

1 John 4:14-18

If we are believing in Jesus and resting in His righteousness alone, then we can rest in this glorious truth of God's perfect love and constant pursuit of our good! (Psalm 23:6)