

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor

December 5, 2021

Lesson 1

Title: A Long Wait

Text: Luke 1:5-25, 57-58

The next several lessons will emerge around the theme of “waiting.” This week’s Focal Passage describes a husband and wife (Zechariah and Elizabeth) who waited almost their entire married life before they finally had the baby they had always wanted.

If you ask a dozen ten-year-olds to draw a picture of a scene from the Christmas story, you will probably get sketches of Mary, Joseph, an angel or two, shepherds, wise men on camels, a manger, and a glowing star. It is not likely that you will get a picture of John the Baptist or his parents. (Come to think of it, you are not likely to get very different results from adults. Go ahead. Try it on your pastor. Just don’t say that I suggested it.)

But, after a brief introduction, that’s the way Luke began his Gospel account. As Luke reported it, Daddy Zechariah probably would not have included himself in a drawing about the coming of the Messiah. When he heard the news of his forthcoming baby, he didn’t even believe it (Luke 1:18). But maybe we can get a clue in his name: Zechariah in Hebrew means “Yahweh has remembered.”

If God gave me a choice of overseeing “what was going to happen” or “when it happened,” I think I’d choose to control “when it happened.” Why is waiting so hard? Is it the way that doubt begins to creep in? Is it wanting to show others what a good prognosticator I am? Is it that I am super eager to get to the good stuff? (How hard is it to wait for the “bad stuff”?)

Everyone assumed that Elizabeth and Zechariah’s son would be named after his father (verse 59). No, the parents wanted the boy named “John” (verses 60, 63). That name comes from a Hebrew word meaning “Yahweh is gracious.”

Waiting. Elizabeth and Zechariah waited for their son, John. John the Baptist pointed to the Messiah for whom the people had waited. And now, we wait for his coming again. Waiting.

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “God of saving power, you send those who prepare the way. Open my heart and mind to receive with faith the promise that they make and stay with me as I wait.”

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