

**Sad Things Happen to Good People:
the announcement of John the Baptist's birth
Luke 1:5-25**

There had been no prophetic revelation for 400 years. It's in that context that Luke opens his gospel and introduces us to an older couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Sad things happen to good people: Zechariah and Elizabeth were good people. They weren't self-righteous or righteous in the company of others but different behind closed doors. They were righteous before God. And yet they were childless. They had endured years of infertility when infertility was shameful.

Why do sad things happen to good people? It wasn't because of their sin, or because this was some sort of demonic attack, it was God's doing until his perfect timing came to pass. Sometimes we don't understand it, but He is in sovereign control and He knows what He's doing. In Romans 8:18 Paul says, 'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.' It was only afterwards that Zechariah and Elizabeth could understand: their years of infertility and shame and grief were as nothing in comparison to the glory of the coming Messiah that was to be revealed, and their son was to play a part in that.

It's not your faith: Zechariah was a priest and God chooses this special moment in his life to speak to him. Sometimes it may seem that things happen by chance, that we are at the mercy of events, but even in the details God is sovereignly working it out.

Whatever Zechariah has been praying for, he doesn't recognise the answer when it comes. In fact, he can't believe what Gabriel tells him. Zechariah's answer doesn't come because he is some mighty man of faith. Nor does this miracle get cancelled because of his lack of faith. This was God's sovereign moment. This was His perfect timing. And it is not about putting your faith in your faith and depending on yourself. It's about trusting God and looking to him.

Salvation's coming: What God was doing with this couple went way beyond just blessing them. Many would rejoice. John would be filled with the Spirit from the womb, a foretaste of the Spirit indwelling everyone who believes on Jesus. And Gabriel spells out what John's ministry is going to be. He is going to call the people to repentance and bring about reconciliation between God and man and within families.

But he was also going to prepare the way for God to come. We know what Zechariah and Elizabeth couldn't know, that he would come as Jesus. Not as a conquering king, but as a servant, to bear our sins and to forever reconcile us to God.

In the midst of the vast scope of God's purposes in John and then Jesus, God is gracious to this aging lady Elizabeth, and his grace is for you as well as for the many. And Zechariah and Elizabeth, aging as they were, tell us there is no sell by date on your usefulness in the kingdom.