

Midweek Advent Vespers 1  
St. Luke 1:1-25  
December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Will Also Go Before Him

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

During the Wednesdays of Advent season, we will hear the pre-story to the birth of our Lord + Jesus on Christmas. All of the texts are taken from the first chapter of the Evangelist St. Luke. All of these texts will lead us up to Christmas, and the glorious birth of our Savior + Jesus.

Tonight, we hear of the proclamation of St. John the Baptist's birth. This is fairly well-known story that goes something like this: Zacharias and Elizabeth, his wife, are advanced in years, but were never blessed with a child. Because of this, Zacharias and Elizabeth are looked upon by the Jewish people, their friends and neighbors, as having something wrong with them. Well, as our text says, it happens that Zacharias' turn to serve in the temple comes up. And while he is there burning incense, as the Jewish people prayed outside, an angel of the Lord, Gabriel are text tells us, tells Zacharias that he and Elizabeth were going to have a son, whom they would name John.

Now here comes the important part: Zacharias having heard this good news, starts to question the angel. "*How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.*" Now I do not know but this seems to be a little bold. An angel of the Lord shows up; tells Zacharias that he is going to have a son (something he has been praying for, evidently) and he has the gall to question the proclamation of the Lord God.

I do not know why this is so shocking to me, this sort of thing happens all the time. There are numerous people who either refuse to listen, or do not want to believe, the preaching that comes from the Lord God. It seems as if whatever the Lord God says we are to do or not do, people do the opposite. They would rather follow the desires of their own will, than subject themselves to the will of the Lord God. They want all of the fancy bells and whistles of our society in the Church. They want the things of the devil, and their own hearts, and not the things of the Lord God. The things of the Lord God are too simple, not grand enough.

What is even sadder is that there are those who hear preaching and the Word of God, and ignore it, or doubt it, or pass it off as a childish fairy tale.

It is a good thing for Zacharias that he is given a sign. He will not be able to speak until the day when this thing takes place. Now we learn later in Scripture that that was the day of John's naming. We too have this sign—this muting of Zacharias—as a sign to us of the Lord God's promises.

Think about it, what a great promise Zacharias has been given. His prayer will be answered. He will have a son. But this is not just any ordinary boy; this son to be born to Zacharias is the Forerunner. He is the precursor to Christ. In verses 15-17 of tonight's Gospel reading we hear of all the things that this son of Zacharias and Elizabeth will do. *"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

This is why a lot of time is spent during Advent talking about St. John, the Baptizer. He is the prophet who is responsible for preparing the way for our Lord + Jesus. How does he prepare the way for our Lord and Savior + Jesus? He turns the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And is that not what we are to do during this penitential season of Advent; turn to Christ? To turn away from ourselves, our thoughts, our desires, our ways and means, and turn to hear about Christ and His coming? Both His coming to us as a baby Boy born in a manger in Bethlehem, and also our eyes are directed to the Second Coming of Christ. We are to prepare our hearts and minds for Christ's return. Even as we prepare during this time as our Lord + Jesus comes to us now in His Word and Sacraments.

How do we do that? By hearing His preaching; remembering and living in our Holy Baptisms through daily contrition and faith; by confessing our sins and believing that our sins are forgiven for His sake to the Pastor as if to God Himself; and by joining together as the people of the Triune Lord God around His Son's Body and Blood given under bread and wine for our forgiveness, life and salvation. We prepare ourselves for Christ's return by continuing in the gifts He has given us, and not ignoring them or doubting them.

My dear friends, do not be like Zacharias! Believe for yourselves the promise of God. God has sent His Son, the Christ, and He has paid the penalty of your sins. He has made you His child in the waters of Holy Baptism. He has sent His angel, His messenger, the Pastor, to speak to you *"glad tidings."* The glad tidings of the birth of His Son + Jesus into our flesh. Open your ears and hear. Listen to the promise that has been given to you. Rejoice and be filled with joy and gladness.

That is exactly what the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that this baby boy would bring, *"and you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth."* The birth of a baby brings a lot of joy and gladness to the parents, and many rejoice in the birth of a new baby, but this baby is special because he is born to proclaim the coming of the Messiah, the Lord + Jesus Christ.

We too should rejoice whenever we hear of our Lord + Jesus and what He has done for us. We should rejoice that our Triune Lord God has given us His promise, and that He feeds and sustains us by His holy Word and Sacraments, whenever we gather in this place; even if it is only two or three of us here. For this is our Lord's promise to us, that He will be with us whenever two or three are gathered together in His Name. We do not need the trappings that the church in our modern society says that we do; we do not need whatever the latest so-called "trend" is when we worship. We have His holy Word, the simple and pure Word of God, through which He promised to call us unto Himself, at this we should rejoice and be greatly joyful.

And above all that we should be joyful in this Advent season as we await the coming of our Lord + Jesus in all His glory to restore all things to the way they were meant to be, a world without sin, a people without sin, surrounded by their Lord and Savior Who dries their tears, and carries all their

sorrows, so that there is no longer any more weeping or sorrow, but there is only joy and gladness. Joy and gladness in the One, True, Son of God, Who takes away all of our sin by His death on the tree of the holy cross.

Turn from your ways and look to way of the Lord Triune God—salvation found in the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus Christ alone. Take all of your eyes off of yourself and focus them onto the Lord + Jesus and what He has done for you. Rejoice in Him and what He has done for you. Our Lord + Jesus is coming. He is coming to take us to Himself; to our eternal home in Heaven. Rejoice and be glad! For our Lord desires your salvation. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*