

Midweek Advent Vespers #1  
St. Luke 1:1-25  
December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## To Take Away My Reproach

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Sermon Text:**

“And after these days Elisabeth his wife conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, ‘Thus hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein He looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men.’”

### **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.

My dear friends, we are told by the Evangelist St. Luke that Zacharias and Elisabeth had no children. They were well advanced in age, and Elisabeth was past the age of childbearing. She was barren. This is a recurring theme in the holy Scriptures. The Holy Bible is sprinkled throughout with tales of barren women. The first we encounter is Rachel.

Rachel and Leah, you will remember, were sisters. Jacob had worked for seven years for his uncle Laban that he might be married to Rachel, but his uncle pulled the old switcheroo on him, and he ended up married to Leah. And then had to work another seven years for Rachel. Because Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, the Lord God opened the womb of Leah, and shut up the womb of Rachel. Leah ridiculed her younger sister for her barrenness. It was not until after both Rachel and Leah gave Jacob their husband their servants as concubines that Rachel conceived and gave birth to Joseph. She would have only one more son, Benjamin, dying in childbirth. When she was able to have children, Leah no longer had a cause to ridicule Rachel. Her firstborn son would be deceived by his brothers, who like their mother’s hatred for her sister, also hated their youngest brother, and the son of the hated sister. He would be sold into slavery in Egypt. But this would save the people of Israel from famine.

All this was according to the Lord’s will to show His grace and favor upon His people. The same is shown by the second barren woman of holy Scripture, the wife of Manoah, the father of Samson. She was also unable to have children, until she prayed earnestly for a child. She was granted to give birth to the greatest Judge of Israel, Samson. She was visited by the pre-Incarnate Christ, the Angel of Jehovah, and was told to live the life of a Nazirite, and that her son, too, should live as a Nazirite. In so doing, he was granted extreme strength, so that he could subdue the enemies of the Israelites, the Philistines. The Lord also determined to grant through a barren woman someone who would do great things for His people, and show His love and mercy toward them.

In that same generation, the mother of the Prophet Samuel, Hannah, was also barren. Like

Rachel before her, she was also ridiculed for having no children by her husband's other wife, Peninnah. She also prayed earnestly for a child, promising to dedicate it to the Lord God. She was gifted with being the mother of the Prophet Samuel. Under his leadership, the Philistines would be completely subdued, and he would give the people of Israel their first king, and he would anoint the greatest king of the Israelites, King David. The Lord God worked through the barren woman, Hannah, to gift to the people of Israel someone who would save them from their enemies, and establish the kingship from whom would come the Savior of the world, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ.

In today's reading from the Evangelist St. Luke, we have another woman who is barren. Not only is she barren, but she is past the age of childbearing. For her to have a child it would take a miracle. And it is implied in the reading that even though both Zacharias and Elisabeth were well advanced in age, they still prayed and hoped for a child. This is shown by the angel Gabriel, who appears to Zacharias and tells him that the prayer, the supplication, of him and his wife was to be answered. The miracle for which they prayed was to be granted. She would conceive and give birth to a son, and they would call his name, John.

His name means, "the Lord is gracious." Even in the name by which they were to call the boy, it is shown the grace and mercy of the Lord. "The Lord is gracious", "God is gracious." He is gracious to His people; to His creation. He is even gracious to Zacharias and Elisabeth who were well advanced in years and did not have any children. Elisabeth reflects upon this graciousness of the Lord God when at the end of our Gospel reading for today, she exclaims, "Thus hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein He looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men."

Just like Rachel and Hannah who were ridiculed by their husbands' other wives for their barrenness, so too is Elisabeth reproached by other women for her barrenness. She was made to feel less than by her fellow women. She was reproached and ridiculed, whether that was openly or it was the musings of her own heart, we are not specifically told by the Evangelist St. Luke. But that she felt the reproach of being barren is clear from her own confession. Now her reproach would be taken away. Now she would give birth to a son, and call his name John, the Lord is gracious. The Lord is gracious unto her and her husband Zacharias. Even more so, through this child the people of Israel would be shown the Lord's graciousness.

For St. John the Baptist would be the Forerunner of the Christ of the Lord God. He would go before the Lord to prepare the way of the Lord. He would preach repentance toward the forgiveness of sins. For the spiritually barren people of Israel, on account of their manifold sins and transgressions, could produce no fruit until they had confessed their sins, and turned in faith to the Lord God to provide them with forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation.

And this, my dear friends, is why we see throughout the holy Scriptures these tales of barren women. For they represent the spiritually barren Israel. They represent all those who are trapped in sin and death. They are unable to produce fruit of their own efforts and striving. This must be given to them as a gift. It is the Lord God Who gifts them with a new life. He brings them out of ridicule and reproach into praise and honor. This honor is not on account of something that they did. It is gifted to them because of what the Lord God has done for them. These faithful women, especially Elisabeth who exclaimed that her reproach would now be taken away, recognized the gift that the Lord God had given to them. They understood that it was fully and completely the Lord's work and gift for them.

Our salvation from sin and death is the same thing. Before we were called out of the darkness and death brought about by our sinfulness, we could produce no good fruit. We were without good works and filled with reproach. The Lord God through the proclamation of His Word, preached to us by His angels, declares to us that our sins have now been forgiven by the Lord God Himself. He has sent His Forerunner, St. John the Baptist, to prepare the way of the Lord. He has come Himself in our flesh,

to bear our sins, and fulfill the Law of the Lord God, so that our reproach may be taken away.

The birth of St. John the Baptist, the son of Elisabeth and Zacharias, shows the grace and mercy of the Lord God, not just for them, but for all people. For he goes before the Lord + Jesus preparing His way. The birth of John means that the birth of our Savior from sin, death, and the power of the devil, is soon to come. Just like the births of Joseph, Samson, and the Prophet Samuel all led to the Lord's people being delivered from their enemies, the birth of John would lead the way for the birth of the One Who would defeat our greatest enemies completely and soundly. The Lord + Jesus has defeated sin, death, and the power of the devil, so that we are no longer held in bondage by the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. He has come to take away our reproach from among the people, so that we can rejoice that we are no longer bound in sin and shame, but we now live with the promise that we will one day be called out of this vale of tears to our eternal home in heaven. May He come quickly and show us His love and mercy to us. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

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

*Soli Deo Gloria!*