

***The Season of Advent: The Worship of My Church***

***1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent: "Enter the Temple"***

***Focus Passage: Luke 1:5–25***

***Other Passages Referenced: Hebrews 10:24–25***

**Sermon Recap**

Rich related the story of how last year at this time, his wife Suzie was recovering from surgery. The surgery that had been estimated to take six hours ended up lasting sixteen hours. The waiting to get any word about what was happening and to see Suzie was agonizing. The main question posed in the sermon was "How are we to worship in our waiting to hear from God?"

Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy going back to King David. Mark begins with John the Baptist calling people to repentance. John's Gospel starts with the beginning of creation. However, Luke begins and ends his gospel at the temple. The beginning of Luke depicts the waiting of Zechariah and Elizabeth as they wait for God to answer their prayer to conceive a child. In the culture of the time, many assumed that barrenness was a judgment from God for sin, however, Luke makes it clear that both Zechariah and Elizabeth had been faithful to the LORD (Luke 1:6).

God's people had also been waiting, waiting for 400 years to hear a word from God. The first words through the angel Gabriel to break the silence from God were, "Do not be afraid, your prayer has been heard." During their waiting, Zechariah, Elizabeth, and the people of Israel likely passed moments of questioning whether God had indeed heard their prayers.

Luke shows us that we are to worship in our waiting by gathering together, by praying, and by remaining faithful as we wait. Gabriel spoke to Zechariah when Zechariah was chosen to offer incense in the holy place of the temple where there was a lampstand, a table with 12 loaves of bread, and an altar of incense. Incense was a symbol of prayers rising to the LORD. Jesus, for whom Israel had been waiting and for whom we await His return, became an incarnation of God's lampstand, the bread of life, and prayers to God as He Himself ascended to God and intercedes constantly on our behalf.

In our waiting, let's continue to gather, pray, and remain faithful.

**Group Gathering**

**Group Check-in** — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Ask if anyone would share how they've been hearing and obeying God's direction.

**Allow the Word to Speak** — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

**READ Luke 1:5–25**

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. After saying that Zechariah's prayer had been heard, what did the angel Gabriel say to Zechariah?
4. How did Zechariah respond to the words of the angel Gabriel?
5. How did Gabriel respond to Zechariah and why?

**Put the Word into Practice** — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Is there something for which you are waiting to hear a word from the LORD? How are you worshiping God in the waiting?
2. When you go through times of waiting to hear from God, do you tend to isolate or to gather with others?
3. Is there an area of your life where you are struggling to remain faithful? How can you apply the words of Hebrews 10:24–25.
4. Can you share a personal testimony of how God has spoken to you after a time of apparent silence from Him?

**The Big Question:** What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

**What We Hope Members Glean from the Passage**

1. No set answer.
2. No set answer.
3. Gabriel promised that Zechariah's wife Elizabeth would bear a son and his name was to be John
4. Zechariah questioned the promise of Gabriel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."
5. "You will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."

**SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:** Click [here](#) for some good opportunities.