

CLOSE TO HOME: Laying The Foundation

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Luke 1:57-80

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. 60 But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' 61 They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' 62 Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. 63 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about

throughout the entire hill country of Judea. 66 All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

68 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. 69 He has raised up a mighty savior* for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. 72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. 78 By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon* us, 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

80 The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

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REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. There's a lot in a name. Do you know the backstory of your first or last name? Share the meaning and story of your name.
3. Zechariah had gone mute since his earlier encounter with the angel and learning the news of Elizabeth bearing a child. That time of silence may have been a kind of blessing. In what ways have you experienced silence—whether chosen or required—as a blessing? In what ways do you practice “quiet” or “silence”?
4. Zechariah lays a foundation for his son John with a song of blessing. What are the words, blessings, and actions that have laid the foundation for your life? Who helped lay a foundation of faith for you?
5. How are you laying a foundation of faith for others? What are the specific acts that build a foundation of love?
6. Elizabeth and Zechariah experienced infertility before conceiving John. They are not alone. Perhaps as many as 1 in 7 couples are affected by infertility. This wearying journey often gets overlooked in scripture and in

society. Reflect on how this time of year (and the stories of miracle childbirth) can be hard for couples impacted by infertility, miscarriages, barriers to adoption, or frustrated dreams of family. If you have experienced or struggled with any of these, reflect on what you discovered was helpful or supportive, and what was not.

7. This is the season of Advent, which means “arrival.” It is the season in which the church waits, with great anticipation, for what God brings about in Christ, especially for those long-suffering and longing people who endure an unjust, destructive, and exploitative world. It is a fierce hope in the God who will nevertheless show up in surprising ways to make things right. How does this Advent posture comfort and challenge us now? How do you practice Advent—whether at home, at church, or in the world?

Find resources for practicing Advent:

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