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SERMON TITLE: A Story Better than YouTube!
SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 40:1-9
DATE: November 28, 2021 ADVENT ONE
 Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Luke 1:5-25 and watch the skits on Zechariah and Elizabeth by Sean and Lucy Russell at www.fpcd.org.

Gabriel was sent to earth to invite Zechariah and Elizabeth to be part of a very special story. It was a story more fantastic than YouTube!

Zechariah is in the temple wondering – “You’re here, right Lord. Forgive me for asking, but you’ve been silent for so long.”

Don’t we all feel that way at times? God has been silent.

Serving in the temple was a once-in-a-lifetime privilege.

But, what if someone unexpectedly showed up, like an angel?

The Bible says,

“Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!” (Hebrews 13:2)

They might look like your average person, or even like an attorney!

If you walked into this sanctuary to come and pray for a while, would you be terrified? Reading the story in the Bible it says, “There appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense, and when he saw him Zechariah was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him.” (Lk 1:11-12)

What scares you?

An unexpected bill? Health problems? Someone in your family who stays out too late? Those all seem like natural fears. Anyone would be afraid.

Why? **We are not prepared.**

If we should see, then, actual evidence of someone from the heavenly realm, we would likely be even more terrified.

Would it be that the fear would come because we are not prepared?

How then do we prepare?

Being prepared is a recurring theme in the Bible.

Perhaps it means:

- Turn back to the Lord.
- Don’t just be a believer “in name only,”
- Live into your real identity

Zechariah was a little rusty on opening his heart to the call. He was stuck in unbelief.

You can tell if you are stuck in unbelief when you say to God—*how will I know this is so? For I am old and the evidence does not point to it.*

But the angel insisted this was good news. He got perturbed because Zechariah, who had wanted a baby all these years, was not thrilled at God’s timing.

Zechariah did not believe the angel’s words.

Juxtapose his words to the Angel Gabriel’s words:

Zechariah: “How do I know? For I am old and the evidence does not support it.”

Angel Gabriel: (If you accept this call . . .)

You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. . . . And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.” (Luke 1:14, 16-17)

Now Elizabeth was so shocked she secluded herself for five months.

When you are pregnant time will tell! After those five months of seclusion she said:

“How kind the Lord is! He has taken away my disgrace of having no children” (Luke 1:25).

Later she would tell Mary “Blessed is the one who believes that what the Lord says will come to pass” (Luke 1:45).

To me this means – just go with it. Go through the open door, even if you have no idea how this new, unexpected thing is going to work.

What new thing might the Lord be asked you to do?

The results of Zechariah's and Elizabeth's faithfulness would be someone—their child, John the Baptist making a way for the glory of the LORD to be revealed, and all people would see it together! (Is 40:3-5)

Hear the words of Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God:

When you simply believe, your heart is softened; you have the faith of a child and the joy of those who are young. You will be wise rather than disobedient. Then you will be prepared for God's unexpected blessing.

This is Advent, the month of preparation. Are you prepared for the coming of the Lord?

Here are some words to remember from Isaiah the Prophet about sharing and preparing for this message:

- ✓ Comfort
- ✓ God speaks tenderly
- ✓ God wants us to prepare
- ✓ This is a lifting up to good things
- ✓ A rounding out of the rough spots
- ✓ A leveling of the ups and downs
- ✓ This is the revealing of the LORD!

Are you terrified? Or filled with joy?

AMEN