

RESPONDING TO GOD

Luke 1:18-79

Dec 9, 2018 | Dave Geldart

1. Recap WAITING last wk
 - a. Ended w/ God's word COMING
 - b. And stopped right before Zechariah responds
 - i. HOW WILL this beloved, old, Godly priest respond to God after waiting SO LONG?
2. Pick up v18
3. Before we do.... PRAY
 - a. READ v 18-20
 - b. Fumbles ball
 - c. Doesn't respond well!
4. This is intensely encouraging!
 - a. Have you ever responded poorly to someone?
 - b. Perhaps better question: When's the last time you responded poorly to someone?
 - i. Blown up at your wife
 - ii. Your kids
 - iii. Kept the money after the cashier gave you far too much change?
 - c. Have you ever responded poorly to GOD? To what HE says?
 - i. Have you ever felt the tug at your heart to speak to that person, and you quietly told God no?
 - ii. Have you read his promises to you from his word, and passively (or even actively) mistrusted him?
 1. When he says he loves you
 2. That you're not a mistake
 3. That he's known you from the womb, and has walked with you every toddling step of the way.
 4. That his way is the best life
 - a. His way is the most fulfilling
 - b. Personally, relationally, sexually
 - iii. Have you ever walked the OTHER way?
 - d. Zechariah did.
 - i. We're in good company.
5. Read v 21-23
 - a. Zech messed up.
 - b. There was a consequence.
 - i. His disbelief meant he couldn't speak
 1. Mirroring God's silence. The waiting.
 - c. Sent home. Confused. Angry? Ashamed?
6. But God doesn't leave him there.
 - a. See what happens
7. Read v 24-25
 - a. Zech went home, and took a step of faith.
 - b. Made a different choice!

- c. He obeyed.
 - d. Elizabeth conceived.
 - i. And hope left from the grave
 - e. That fire of faith that had been burning low began to get some oxygen
 - f. In Zach, but also Elizabeth
 - i. We must wonder what all those decades had been life for Elizabeth
 - ii. This daughter of priests.
 - iii. This Good Jewish girl, who had waited all her life for a child.
 - iv. Now she was older. What had that done to her faith?
 - v. How had SHE been waiting?
 - g. She now mirrors her people, the Jews, since the beginning.
 - i. Their founding mother, Sarah, was advanced in years, and barren.
 - ii. She waited all her life for a child.
 - iii. Now, after these last 400 years of silence from God, SHE was pregnant!
 - h. God remembers
8. Zechariah's silence mirrored God's silence these 400 years
- a. He only had to be silent 40 weeks.
 - b. And during that silence, in THAT waiting, hope grew.
 - i. Right alongside the son in his barren wife's womb.
9. Now the scene changes.
- a. Set in cinematic parallel
 - i. In film and TV these are often referred to as the A story and the B story
 - b. A story = Zechariah
 - c. B story = _____
 - d. Let's see how they correspond... God is a master storyteller
10. Read v 26-33
11. Same angel
- a. Gabriel
12. Same basic message
- a. You who've never had a child
 - b. Don't be afraid
 - c. You're going to have a very special son!
 - d. One foretold.
 - e. One for whom YOU'VE been waiting
13. Some things are markedly different
- a. God's speaking to someone totally other than Zech
 - i. He you'd expect God to speak to: a older godly man.
 - 1. A priest.
 - ii. In the temple in Jerusalem
 - b. But here God's word comes to a young girl
 - i. In the middle of nowhere
 - ii. Most likely in her early teens (13/14!)
 - 1. Common for girls betrothed soon after physically able have kids
 - c. Her message is even more wonderful than Zach's

- i. Her child will reign forever on the throne of David
 - ii. She knows exactly who this was.... God himself, the Messiah, the seed of promise
- 14. How will Mary respond???
- a. Read v 34
 - b. Nearly same words as Zech!
 - c. Read 35-37
 - d. But no rebuke from the Angel to Mary for unbelief!
 - i. "Man looks at the outside, but God looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)
 - e. Zach's was a problem of faith
 - f. Mary's was a problem of understanding. She simply needed a little more info.
 - g. See how God interacts with Mary here
 - i. He answers her question!
 - ii. The HS will come over you and bring life from nothing
 - iii. The SAME SPIRIT who hovered over the dark, chaotic waters in Genesis 1, and breathed life into a barren planet.
- 15. Zach responded poorly
- 16. How will Mary Respond?
- a. Read v38
 - b. Mary responds well!
 - c. This little peasant girl in backwater Nazareth, God chooses her...
 - d. She says OK!
 - e. Even better than that, she says I trust you, I'm yours, let it be done unto me.
- 17. This is what makes God's heart sing
- a. When simple men and women – BOYS AND GIRLS – hear his word and respond in faith with a simple yes – let it be done unto me.
 - b. I don't understand much. Lots of questions.
 - c. But I'm in.
- 18. Mary responds well
- 19. And all history turns.
- a. Everything changes.
 - b. And a little virgin girl from backwater Israel will become the most famous woman of all time.
 - i. Arguably more famous than Sarah, or Eve.
 - ii. Because she trusted God. And said YES.
- 20. The chapter could end here.
- 21. This would be enough. Be like Mary. Say yes. Not like Zach who said no.
- 22. But there's more.
- 23. Another story!
- a. It's unexpected.
- 24. Read v39-47
- a. An unlikely scene
 - b. No men here
 - c. Just an old woman and a young girl
 - d. Both miraculously pregnant
 - e. Both filled with the Holy Spirit

- f. God's spirit is flooding the room!
 - i. And women and babies are exploding with joy
 - ii. God's spirit is pouring everywhere
 - iii. Even the babies!
 - 1. JTB leaps for joy, even in the womb pointing to Jesus – as he'd do the rest of his life
 - iv. And out of the overflow of the Spirit, both these women worship – and prophesy.
25. Look in this room.
- a. Do you see?
 - b. We're supposed to see Mary and Elizabeth on the inside.
 - i. Our skin is supposed to prickle when they all get in the same room and the Spirit of the Lord overflows in joy.
 - ii. Its a room full of women and babies. **AND EVERYONE IS FILLED WITH GOD'S SPIRIT. INCLUDING THE BABIES!!!!** We're supposed to notice them **PROPHESYING!**
 - c. We're supposed to see how priestly, **RIGHTEOUS** Zach mess up.
 - i. We're supposed to see his silence.
 - d. And we're supposed to notice Mary lined up with the same deal -- and getting it right! Far from silent, she's shouting and rejoicing and prophesying!
26. This juxtaposition is intentional.
- a. Zach had everything going for him... a man. A priest. But when it came to it, he got it wrong.
 - b. And the women Got it right!
27. God loves to flip everything on its head.
- a. He truly is building an upside down kingdom. It's on its head from everything we expect and know.
 - b. Or perhaps we're the ones upside down????
 - c. *We're the ones upside down when we think _____ -*
 - i. *That God only uses important people*
 - ii. *That growing up in church or "going every Sunday" will guarantee we respond well to God and his Word*
 - iii. ***That women are untrustworthy, second-class citizens in God's eyes, and shouldn't be trusted to lead in the church***
28. But God's not done
- a. Let's not forget old Zechariah
 - b. Because God hasn't
 - c. He's not rejected by God.
 - d. He's already had a second response.
 - e. And there's more opportunities to respond in faith to come.
 - i. **JUST LIKE GOD's not rejected wayward Israel.**
29. The perfect ending
- a. Read v57-63
 - i. Zech's baby is born and he has to push back the crowd of family wanting to name him ben-Zacheriah. Be Zech remembers what **GOD TOLD HIM**. And his heart is burning with trust.
 - b. Read v 64-67

- i. As soon as he writes down HIS NAME IS JOHN (just as the angel instructed him), his silence is broken! God's spirit floods down, on faith the size of a seed, and old Zach isn't left out of the joy.
 - c. THE SAME SPIRIT that just overflowed into Elizabeth and Mary -- flows into Zach and neither can he contain it. He's filled with the HS. And prophecies too.
- 30. God is wonderful.
 - a. He has remembered his promise.
- 31. And God's pouring out his spirit everywhere.
 - a. On ALL who respond to him in faith
 - i. Not just the holy men
 - b. Joel 2: 28 [in the last days] ...I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.
- 32. Do you see the cosmic cinema playing out here?
 - a. Zach messed up, but then got it right.
 - b. Mary got it right from the start.
 - c. Both of them were filled with the Spirit of God and prophesied the Words of the God who had been silent.
 - d. God remembers.
- 33. Application
 - a. Respond to God's Word
 - i. No matter who you are. What you've done. What you've been told.
 - 1. You matter. And God's word speaks to you. Tonight.
 - ii. He's not left us groping in the dark. He's spoken to us!
 - 1. Through his Word.
 - iii. He has spoken through the Bible
 - 1. Through his Word.
 - iv. God's word tells us that Jesus IS God's Word become a human!
 - 1. And he's come.
 - 2. And he's coming again.
 - v. His Spirit is here. Tonight. Speaking to us.
 - 1. How will you respond?
- 34. We live in a desert. A spiritual wasteland.
 - a. Yes America may look amazingly prosperous
 - b. We've got money aplenty
 - c. And most of us have so much food we're dying of obesity
- 35. But there's a famine in our land --- a famine for the WORD OF GOD.
 - a. Just as Amos prophesied 2750 yrs ago,
 - b. 8:11 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God, "when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.
- 36. And our souls are dying of hunger for THAT Word. For Jesus, the Bread of Life.

- a. You need it. Your neighbor needs it.
- b. The word became flesh
- c. These are the last days!
- d. He's coming again.
- e. Are you young? new to the faith.
 - i. Look at Mary! You can respond to God's word well from the Get Go.
 - ii. Who knows what God might do as you say yes to him.
 - iii. Same God. Same Word. Same power.
 - iv. That same spirit that filled all of these. He filled John the Baptist. And Jesus.
 - v. That spirit who raised Jesus from the Dead lives in me.
 - 1. And he can live in you.
- f. Or have you responded with disbelief before?
 - i. Are the embers of your hope buried and cool?
- g. How have you been responding to God's Word lately?

37. Look at Zechariah!!!

- a. No one is ever too far gone for God's grace.
 - i. Second chances. Third chances. 500th chances.
- b. If you're still living, you can **embrace your second (or 2022nd) response!**
- c. **Talk more about 2nd responses!!!**
 - i. It's all about your SECOND response
 - ii. We all make mistakes. Poor choices. Respond poorly.
 - 1. To our spouses
 - 2. Kids
 - 3. God
 - iii. But you can ALWAYS come back later, after you realize you responded poorly, and have a 2nd response
 - iv. That's repentance.
 - 1. Re – pent
 - 2. Turn around. Turn back again to God and Truth
 - v. When we repent, we embrace that 2nd response.
 - vi. Not just when you first repent of your life of sin and turn to Christ for life,
 - vii. But it's a LIFESTYLE of repentance
 - 1. Constantly turning again
 - viii. Maturity really is shortening that time it takes between our 1st sinful response, and when we come back with our 2nd Godly response.
 - 1. Sometimes that time frame is measured in days, weeks, YEARS!
 - ix. But we can have our 2nd response more quickly.
 - 1. We may always have that 1st kneejerk sinful response, part of being here in the flesh – OH how we look forward to being freed from our own sin!
 - 2. But we can so shorten that gap between that 1st and our 2nd response that sometimes no one may ever notice – may stay all in our heads.
 - 3. This can be intensely encouraging to those of us wanting to grow in maturity.
 - 4. It's specific, measurable, attainable
 - x. Learn to value 2nd responses

d.

38. How will you respond?

a. Now.

39. Maybe you need to trust God to be the Lord and Savior of your life tonight

a. Maybe you need to stop resisting him, his love, his forgiveness

b. And embrace him as Savior and king

c. Don't wait!

40. Maybe, like Zechariah, you know God, follow him, but you've been resisting him in a certain area of your life:

a. Maybe you're holding on to secret sin

b. Maybe you're holding on to heart idols – looking to OTHER things for fulfillment and security

c. Maybe you need to take a new scary step of faith

d. That 2nd response

i. Whether it's confessing sins to your brothers and sisters in Christ

ii. Or letting folks in to the mess that is your real inner life

iii. Respond today. Make that second response.

41. God loves to pour out his spirit

42. To fill us with good things.

43. Don't wait. Respond to God. To his word.

44. Yes Lord, let it be done unto me.

45. Finally, if you're in a time of waiting, be encouraged. Waiting well is directly tied to being ready to respond well.

a. We can be prepping to respond well when the time comes

b. This applies to 1st AND 2nd responses!

c. Zech likely learned more in 9 months of waiting than he did in the previous 70 years!

d. Elizabeth:

i. Since she experienced years of barrenness, there's no doubt that while she and Zechariah begged God for a child together, she had congratulated many pregnant women, had assisted in deliveries, and had watched countless friends and relatives have babies. It had to be painful to watch with empty arms ... over and over again.

ii. And yet when she was finally visited with God's merciful planting of a baby in her womb, "for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, 'Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people'" (Luke 1:24-25).

iii. She spent her first 2 trimester in social silence.

1. DIDN'T put it on Instagram!

2. Instead those years of waiting had prepared her.

a. Instead of metastasizing into bitterness or utter despair

b. She was ready so that when the time came, she had cultivated a heart of humble gratitude

c. She responded WELL

e. As you wait for God, how are you waiting?

- i. Are you cultivating a heart of anger, bitterness, despair?
 - ii. Or are you fighting those temptations head on?
 - 1. Choosing to wait in hope. Cultivating thanksgiving.
 - f. It's never too late to turn again ... to have a second response. EVEN in the waiting
46. Yes lord, let it be done unto me.

Pray

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