

SERMON

Luke 1:5-20

The Promise Keeper

Nunawading and Waverley, 6-9-20

Dear friends in Christ,

During the restrictions, a lot of celebrations, graduations, birthdays etc are not being celebrated the way we would really like them to be. Some important events could even slip by unnoticed. I am not sure if we did anything as church on May 10 for our mothers. Zoom is good but it just cannot replace family and friends coming together. Today is Fathers' Day and we remember a man and a woman who desperately wanted to be parents but their dream had had been crushed. What they did not factor in was this; the Lord is a promise keeper.

Why didn't God choose a younger priest to produce a child who would later prepare the nation of Israel for its coming Saviour? I think the reason was to demonstrate his grace, that he would keep his promise of sending the Messiah to Israel but it would be his work and not through the planning and efforts of human beings. Zechariah and Elizabeth were probably in their forties and were infertile. Theirs was a hopeless situation. And as I have said before, we sometimes face intractable problems, a long period of unemployment or a chronic illness. Hopelessness can get hold of a congregation, too, and all it can think of survival, let alone mission. Since he displays his power through grace, we can be certain he will keep his promise to us.

God spoke to Zechariah from his presence in the temple. Each Sunday we come into the Lord's presence but in a much closer way than a priest being chose once in a while to burn incense. All of us as children of our heavenly Father gather together where he speaks to us through his word and is miraculously close to us in Christ, who is physically present for us in the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper. Since our Lord is closer to us than our skin, how could he not keep his promises to us?

It is true, that we do not meet **the arch angel Gabriel** in the sanctuary of God yet we still receive God's special attention. The Lord's promise of **rejoicing and exultation** after tough years is ours. God intervened and brought Israel's destiny to fulfillment. That intervention started with John, reached its pinnacle in his cousin Jesus, and now comes to us in the gift of the Holy Spirit. John never saw what our Lord Jesus did through his

cross and could not have imagined him walking out of the tomb alive and ascending to a position of power and glory at God's right hand, but we have. Here is another reason to believe that our Lord will keep his promise since he has done all these things for us.

Our Father keeps his promise for each of us though it is not necessarily a promise to make each step of our journey through life easy. God is not our servant. His promise to Zechariah and Elizabeth was for a son who would **be great**, not great in the way people seek greatness but great in the way the Lord would accomplish his wonders through him. John was like the great reformer **Elijah**, who brought the Northern Kingdom back to the Lord. John, too, would lead many to repentance. Eventually, Herod would execute him and have his head removed and placed on a tray. Keeping promises does not mean the Lord should give us everything we want.

God is a promise-keeper when it comes to **turning the hearts of the parents to the children**, to make cynical old people open their heart to the Lord, like children, and trust him. That is what parenting is all about, or put it this way, amongst all the nurturing, correcting, providing and loving of children, the apex is keeping them close to Jesus our Lord. For that to happen, parents need to live in Christ each day, sit before him in humility, to be forgiven, to be saved by him and in response, love him with all their strength.

All the promises of God come to this point of **turning hearts**, though not all hearts are turned. If you want your children to be close to be close to the Lord, he will keep his promise to support you. If you have a godly task in mind, whatever it might be, God will keep his promise to bring plans to fruition, though he may not guarantee of 100% success. **Hearts will be turned**, and that is a promise.