

Our Bible Sister
Elizabeth

Singing the Songs of Salvation



We Join Mary and Zechariah in Singing

Opening Prayer and Song

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” CW-21 #354 verses 1-3

**1 O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold him,
born the King of angels.**

Refrain:

**O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!**

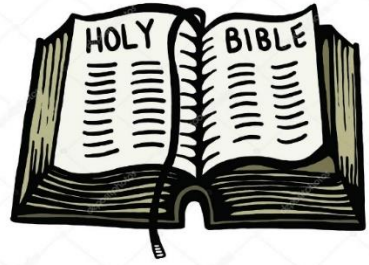
**2 God from true God, and
Light from Light eternal,
born of a virgin, to earth he comes!
Only-begotten Son of God the Father: [Refrain]**

**3 Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heav’n above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest: [Refrain]**



Some days it's difficult to sing. Life is tough, circumstances seem overwhelming, and disappointments crowd our minds. As Luke first introduces us to Elizabeth, this might describe her life. Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah, were living in Judah under the oppressive Roman rule of the infamous Herod. Elizabeth was about 70 years old and barren. But they remained faithful to their God and were filled with the hope of a Savior.

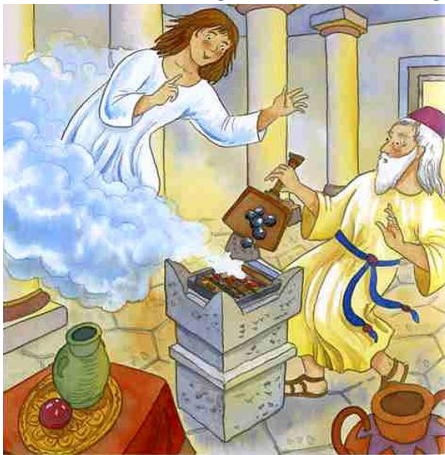
Read Luke 1:5-63 (Contemporary English Version)



⁵ When Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest by the name of Zechariah from the priestly group of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was from the family of Aaron.^[a] ⁶ Both of them were good people and pleased the Lord God by obeying all that he had commanded. ⁷ But they did not have children. Elizabeth could not have any, and both Zechariah and Elizabeth were already old.

⁸ One day Zechariah's group of priests were on duty, and he was serving God as a priest. ⁹ According to the custom of the priests, he had been chosen to go into the Lord's temple that day and to burn incense,^[a] ¹⁰ while the people stood outside praying.

¹¹ All at once an angel from the Lord appeared to Zechariah at the right side of the altar. ¹² Zechariah was confused and afraid when he saw the angel. ¹³ But the angel told him:



Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayers. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you must name him John. ¹⁴ His birth will make you very happy, and many people will be glad. ¹⁵ Your son will be a great servant of the Lord. He must never drink wine or beer, and the power of the Holy Spirit will be with him from the time he is born.

¹⁶ John will lead many people in Israel to turn back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will go ahead of

the Lord with the same power and spirit that Elijah^[a] had. And because of John, parents will be more thoughtful of their children. And people who now disobey God will begin to think as they ought to. This is how John will get people ready for the Lord.

¹⁸ Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know this is going to happen? My wife and I are both very old."

¹⁹ The angel answered, "I am Gabriel, God's servant, and I was sent to tell you this good news. ²⁰ You have not believed what I

have said. So you will not be able to say a thing until all this happens. But everything will take place when it is supposed to.”

²¹ The crowd was waiting for Zechariah and kept wondering why he was staying in the temple so long. ²² When he did come out, he could not speak, and they knew he had seen a vision. He motioned to them with his hands, but did not say a thing.

²³ When Zechariah's time of service in the temple was over, he went home. ²⁴ Soon after this, his wife was expecting a baby, and for five months she did not leave the house. She said to herself, ²⁵ “What the Lord has done for me will keep people from looking down on me.”

²⁶ One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee ²⁷ with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. ²⁸ The angel greeted Mary and said, “You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. ³⁰ Then the angel told Mary, “Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, ³¹ and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. ³³ He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ Mary asked the angel, “How can this happen? I am not even married!”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. ³⁶ Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. ³⁷ Nothing is impossible for God!”

³⁸ Mary said, “I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said.” And the angel left her.

³⁹ A short time later Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea. ⁴⁰ She went into Zechariah's home, where she greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, her baby moved within her. The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth.

42 Then in a loud voice she said to Mary:

God has blessed you more than any other woman! He has also blessed the child you will have. ⁴³ Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby became happy and moved within me. ⁴⁵ The Lord has blessed you because you believed that he will keep his promise.



46 Mary said:

With all my heart I praise the Lord,⁴⁷ and I am glad because of God my Savior.

⁴⁸ God cares for me, his humble servant.

From now on, all people will say God has blessed me.

God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy.

⁵⁰ He always shows mercy to everyone who worships him.

⁵¹ The Lord has used his powerful arm to scatter those who are proud.

⁵² God drags strong rulers from their throne and puts humble people in places of power.

⁵³ God gives the hungry good things to eat, and sends the rich away with nothing.

⁵⁴ God helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people.

⁵⁵ The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever!

⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months. Then she went back home.

⁵⁷ When Elizabeth's son was born, ⁵⁸ her neighbors and relatives heard how kind the Lord had been to her, and they too were glad.

⁵⁹ Eight days later they did for the child what the Law of Moses commands.^[6] They were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. ⁶⁰ But Elizabeth said, “No! His name is John.”

⁶¹ The people argued, “No one in your family has ever been named John.” ⁶² So they motioned to Zechariah to find out what he wanted to name his son.

⁶³ Zechariah asked for a writing tablet. Then he wrote, “His name is John.” Everyone was amazed.

1. What do we learn about Elizabeth and her husband?

2. It appears Elizabeth and Zechariah had prayed for a son for many years. At this age, they would have assumed God had said “No” but his answer had really been “Not yet.” Now he was answering this deep-seated prayer. (vs. 8-13) Do you feel comfortable sharing a time when you waited patiently, or not so patiently, for God to answer your prayer? Are you still waiting? Have you lost hope?

3. Why do you think the Lord silenced Zechariah during his wife’s pregnancy? What do you think that time of silence taught him?

4. Can you imagine Zechariah coming home, trying to tell Elizabeth what had happened using notes and hand gestures! What was Elizabeth’s response? (vs. 14-25)

5. Has God ever answered your prayers with a WOW, far beyond anything you could ever have imagined?

6. In Elizabeth's sixth month, Gabriel comes again, this time to Mary. Mary didn't question in unbelief but rather in bewilderment – "How will this happen?" Why might the angel have mentioned Elizabeth at this time? (vs. 26-38)

7. We don't hear much about angels in the Bible. Why do you think God sent angels to Zechariah and Mary on these occasions?

8. Read vs 39-45. What do you think Elizabeth was thinking when she asked "Why am I so favored?" (vs. 39-45)

9. What do we learn about Elizabeth from vs 45?

10. Consider verses 46-55. It sounded like an unlikely sentiment coming from an even more unlikely source. How could Mary's soul glorify the Lord and her spirit rejoice in God her Savior? Was God even still her Savior? How could any generation call her blessed once they learned of her circumstances? An unwed mother, a man who planned to divorce her, a denial of guilt, and a far-fetched

story of a child conceived by the Holy Spirit—none of these seemed like reasons for Mary’s words. What are your thoughts about Mary’s reaction to her pregnancy?

WE SING: SONG OF MARY (*MAGNIFICAT*) CW page 57



**My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed.
The Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name,
He has mercy on those who fear him
in ev-'ry generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm;
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel,
for he has remembered this promise of mercy,
The promise made to our fathers,
to Abraham, and to this children forever.
Amen.**

11. How did Mary respond to Elizabeth's blessing? Think of how Elizabeth's words encouraged this response from Mary. (vs. 46-55)

12. What more do we learn about Elizabeth from her response to the people? (vs. 57-63)

We join to sing:

"Now Sing We, Now Rejoice" CW-21 #363 verses 1 & 4

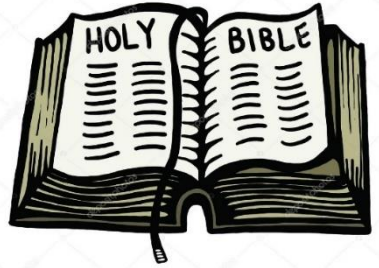
**1 Now sing we, now rejoice,
now raise to heav'n our voice;
he from whom joy streameth
poor in a manger lies;
not so brightly beameth
the sun in yonder skies.
Thou my Savior art!
Thou my Savior art!**

**4 Oh, where shall joy be found?
Where but on heav'nly ground,
where the angels singing
with all his saints unite,
sweetest praises bringing
in heav'nly joy and light.
Oh, that we were there!
Oh, that we were there!**



Read Zechariah's song in vs 64-79.

64 At once, Zechariah started speaking and praising God. 65 All the neighbors were frightened because of what had happened, and everywhere in the hill country people kept talking about these things. 66 Everyone who heard about this wondered what this child would grow up to be. They knew the Lord was with him. 67 The Holy Spirit came upon Zechariah, and he began to speak:



68 Praise the Lord, the God of Israel! He has come to save his people.

69 Our God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David his servant.

*70 Long ago the Lord promised by the words of his holy prophets
71 to save us from our enemies and from everyone who hates us.*

72 God said he would be kind to our people and keep his sacred promise.

73 He told our ancestor Abraham 74 that he would rescue us from our enemies. Then we could serve him without fear, 75 by being holy and good as long as we live.

76 You, my son, will be called the prophet of God Most High. You will go ahead of the Lord to get everything ready for him.

77 You will tell his people that they can be saved when their sins are forgiven.

78 God's love and kindness will shine upon us like the sun that rises in the sky.

79 On us who live in the dark shadow of death this light will shine to guide us into a life of peace.



We join to sing:

“Blest Be the God of Israel” CW #275 v. 1

**Blessed be the God of Israel,
Who comes to set us free;
He visits and redeems us;
He grants us liberty.
He prophets spoke of mercy,
Of freedom and release;
God shall fulfill his promise
And bring his people peace.**

13. Picture Elizabeth listening to her husband. What might she have been thinking?

14. Elizabeth was bitterly disappointed as she grew older without a child, and finally to a point where it seemed it would never happen. Yet she accepted her situation and continued to worship and praise God. How can we also be content with our lot in life?

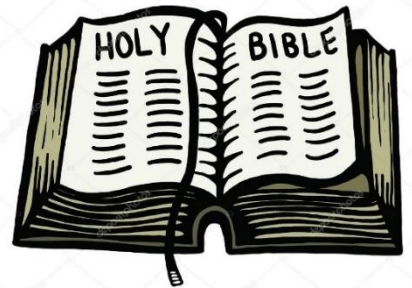
15. What can hinder us? Read 1 John 1:5-9.

⁵ Jesus told us God is light and doesn't have any darkness in him. Now we are telling you.

⁶ If we say we share in life with God and keep on living in the dark, we are lying and are not living by the truth. ⁷ But if we live in the light, as God does, we share in life with each other.

And the blood of his Son Jesus washes all our sins away. ⁸ If we say we have not sinned, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth isn't in our hearts. ⁹ But if we confess our sins to God, he can

always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away.



16. Do you have a song in your heart? Is there something or someone dampening that song, filling you with worry instead of peace, making you fearful instead of confident? Stop, confess your sins and talk to the Lord about these things – let him answer your prayers in his time and in his way.

We join to sing:

“Joy to the World” CW-21 #353

**1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let ev’ry heart prepare him room
and heav’n and nature sing,
and heav’n and nature sing,
and heav’n, and heav’n and nature sing.**

**2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**3 No more let sins and sorrows grow
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.**

**4 He rules the world with truth and grace
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.**



For further meditation during the advent season:

On your own, meditate on these passages that will help you keep a song in your heart:

- 1 John 1:9-10
- Colossians 3:16
- Ephesians 5:18-21
- Philippians 4:4-9

References:

Barber, Wayne; Rasnake, Eddie; Shepherd, Richard. Life Principles from the Women of the Bible, Book 2

Lockyer, Herbert. All the Women of the Bible

Prange, Victor H. People's Bible Commentary – Luke

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