

Tuesday 12:10pm PRE-ADVENT Online Bible Study
Exploring the Call of John the Baptist to “Prepare the Way For the Lord.”

Based on the book & the leader guide:

Prepare the Way For the Lord: Advent & the Message of John the Baptist by Adam Hamilton

4 Week Session: October 25 - November 15

SESSION 4 (November 15): Pregnancy, Birth, Circumcision, and Zechariah’s Prophecy (Part 3)

Opening Prayer: Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to voices preparing your way. Grant us the wisdom to see your purpose and the openness to hear your will, that we too may prepare the way of your Anointed one who comes to establish your kingdom of peace and justice; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

<https://stjohnsnyc.org/zechariahs-new-voice/>

His Name Is John – Giving Voice to God’s Grace

Luke 1:57-64; Ephesians 2:8-10

A Father’s Prophetic Word – Light to Those in Darkness

Luke 1:65-66, 68-79; Malachi 3:1

Luke 1:57-66 ESV

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸ And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹ And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, ⁶⁰ but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” ⁶¹ And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” ⁶² And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. ⁶⁴ And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. ⁶⁵ And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, ⁶⁶ and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him.

Quotes from Hamilton & Questions for Discussion:

The name “John” (Hebrew, *Johanan*) means “The Lord is gracious.” How appropriate is and will this name be for Elizabeth and Zechariah’s child?

Hamilton notes that the Greek word for grace appears more than 150 times in the New Testament. Christians believe that grace is a defining characteristic of God (along with attributes like love and justice). How do you define *grace*?

Hamilton calls receiving and giving grace “the rhythm of the Christian life.” What does ***Ephesians 2:8-10*** say about the rhythm grace?

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

When was a time you experienced grace? When was a time that you extended grace to another person?

Reflecting on Zechariah's Prophecy:

Luke 1:67-79 See Elizabeth, Mary, & Zechariah document

Malachi 3:1 ESV

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

What word, phrase, or image in Zechariah's prophetic speech most grabs your attention or excites your imagination? Why?

How do Zechariah's words characterize God? Which of these characteristics do you find most meaningful, and why?

How is the work Zechariah says God will do through Jesus and John consistent with God's past work for Israel? Is it new and different?

When, if ever, have you burst out in praise of God's grace, as the Holy Spirit moved Zechariah to do?

Hamilton writes, Zechariah's "prophetic word captures the Advent message of John the Baptist. It summarizes what Advent is all about ... This is Advent, when the dawn from heaven breaks upon us, regardless of the darkness we've been living in."

Think about someone you know who you think is "sitting in darkness." Is there one specific thing you could do this Advent season to reflect God's light for that person?

Closing Prayer: *Blessed are you, O God, for compassionately shining your light of love on us in Jesus Christ. Although you called your prophet John to go before him in a unique way, you call us to carry his light into darkness even today. By the power of your Spirit, may we serve you without fear and walk always in the paths of peace. Amen. (Hamilton)*