

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 3 (November 8): Pregnancy, Birth, Circumcision, and Zechariah’s Prophecy (Part 2)

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, in choosing the Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son, you made known your gracious regard for the poor, the lowly, and the despised, and you inspired her to visit Elizabeth and assist her in her need; Grant us grace to receive your word in humility, and so to be made one with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

<http://ourredeemernewark.org/the-visitation/#:~:text=Almighty%20God%2C%20in%20choosing%20the,with%20your%20Son%2C%20Jesus%20Christ>

Who Is Your Elizabeth? Who Is Your Mary?

Luke 1:24-55 ESV

See also Elizabeth, Mary, & Zechariah document

²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ²⁵ “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

Quotes from Hamilton & Questions for Discussion:

Luke says the Holy Spirit was present and active during Elizabeth and Mary's visit. How often do you think of your family visitations as opportunities for the Spirit to act? Why?

Hamilton states that Elizabeth essentially prophesies in her words to Mary. How so? What do Elizabeth's words show us about the nature and function of prophetic speech? When, if ever, have you heard prophecy for yourself?

Hamilton points out Elizabeth is the first person to make the "fundamental confession of the Christian faith," that Jesus is Lord.

Romans 10:9 ESV

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Who was the first person you heard make this confession? If you made this confession for yourself, when did you first make it? How can and do Christians make this confession with more than words?

"Elizabeth is the first person to celebrate Mary's pregnancy," Hamilton notes. When and how have you celebrated someone's pregnancy? Has your congregation celebrated someone's pregnancy?

Hamilton sees Mary's visit to Elizabeth as evidence of a deep relationship that likely formed over many years, beginning when Mary was younger. What long-lasting relationships with older adults have positively influenced you, and how?

"Everyone needs an Elizabeth," writes Hamilton, "but as we get older, we also find ourselves needing a Mary." When and how, if ever, have you mentored, encouraged, and celebrated a younger person?

How does or how could your congregation celebrate, support, and create the "dense networks of caring" Hamilton sees in Elizabeth and Mary's relationship?

Closing Prayer:

Mighty God,
by whose grace Elizabeth rejoiced with Mary
and greeted her as the mother of the Lord:
look with favour on your lowly servants
that, with Mary, we may magnify your holy name
and rejoice to acclaim her Son our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/churchs-year/festivals/visit-blessed>