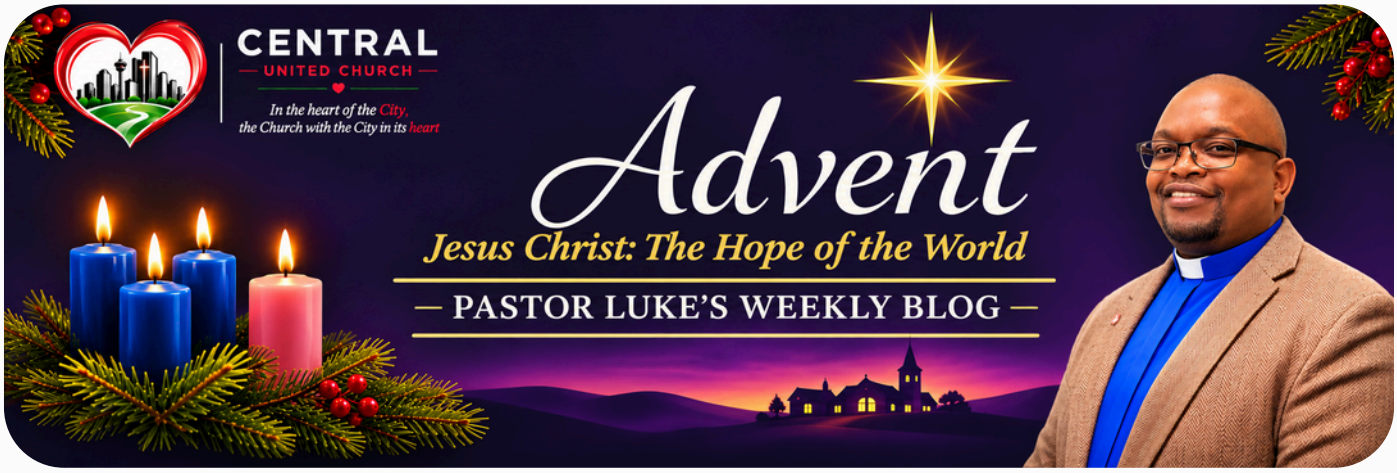


November 26, 2026

YOUR PRAYER IS HEARD



LUKE 1: 13, 16-17

But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.'

And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus' birth with an elderly couple whose lives embodied both faithfulness and disappointment. In their story, the long silence is finally broken, and God shows us what true hope looks like.

Luke introduces Zacharias, a priest, and his wife Elizabeth, who was also from a priestly family. ***They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years*** (Luke 1:6-7).

That little word ***but*** carries a lifetime of sorrow. In their culture, childlessness was often seen as a sign of divine disfavour. Elizabeth later spoke of the ***reproach among people*** she had carried (Luke 1:25). Their righteousness had not protected them from pain. Luke wants us to understand that suffering is not proof that God has abandoned us, and faithfulness does not guarantee an easy road.

Zacharias and Elizabeth stand in a long line of barren couples in Scripture, including Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Elkanah and Hannah, through whom God brought new life when every human possibility had been exhausted. God specializes in beginnings that only He can explain.

Zacharias was chosen by lot to burn incense in the Holy Place of the temple, possibly a once-in-a-lifetime privilege. As the whole multitude prayed outside, an angel appeared ***standing on the right side of the altar of incense*** (Luke 1:11). Zacharias was terrified.

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The angel's first words are heaven's first words to humanity in four hundred years: ***Do not be afraid.*** Then comes the astonishing news: ***your prayer is heard***.

The personal and the national, the private longing and the cosmic promise, were merged in a single act of grace. The name John means **The LORD is gracious,** and the name Zacharias means **The LORD remembers.** God had remembered, and God was gracious.

The son promised to Zacharias would not be an ordinary child. He would be ***great in the sight of the Lord*** and **filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb** (Luke 1:15). He would come ***in the spirit and power of Elijah***, fulfilling Malachi's final promise. His task was to ***prepare a people for the Lord.***

John's entire life was directed toward Jesus. As he later said, ***He must increase, but I must decrease*** (John 3:30). Hope in Scripture always looks forward to Christ.

The writer of Hebrews describes this kind of hope as ***an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast*** (Hebrews 6:19). An anchor does not stop the storm, but it holds the ship in place while the storm rages. Our hope holds us steady because it is fastened to God's faithfulness, not our circumstances.

Zacharias responded to the angel with a question: ***How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years*** (Luke 1:18). He wanted a guarantee. Gabriel answered with a sign of a different kind: Zacharias would be unable to speak until the promise was fulfilled (Luke 1:20).

When John was born, and the neighbours wanted to name him after his father, Zacharias wrote, ***'His name is John'... Immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God*** (Luke 1:63-64). His first words were a song of hope:

Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people... Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death (Luke 1:68, 78-79).

The ***Dayspring from on high*** is the rising sun, an echo of Malachi's ***Sun of Righteousness*** who would ***arise with healing in His wings*** (Malachi 4:2). Zacharias saw that his son was the herald of sunrise, and the sun was Jesus.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth kept herself hidden for five months and said, ***Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people*** (Luke 1:25). Hope restored her dignity. God saw her.

The story of Zacharias and Elizabeth does not promise that every prayer will be answered in the way or timing we desire. But it does promise that God hears, remembers, and is gracious. Our ultimate hope is in the God who has come in Jesus Christ and will come again.

Soli Deo Gloria – to God alone be the glory!
Rev. Luke Haisa