

December 3, 2017

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (the First Advent Sunday)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Praise to Be the Lord"

— Zechariah's Magnificat —

Text: Luke 1:67~79

**1:67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:**

**1:68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.**

**1:69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David**

**1:70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),**

**1:71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us**

**1:72 to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,**

**1:73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:**

**1:74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear**

**1:75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.**

**1:76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,**

**1:77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,**

**1:78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven**

**1:79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.**

### Introduction

- We have come to the first Sunday of Advent. In the next four weeks we will be preparing to celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ, Christmas.
- The theme of today's message is, "Praise Be to the Lord!" and this is a really good theme for the first Sunday of Advent. It is very important for the saints who believe in God to praise him. Today's text is well-known for "Zechariah's Magnificat", which records an important story before the birth of Jesus.
- A baby was born, whose name was John, and his parents' names were Zechariah and Elizabeth. John would later be called John the Baptist and became a great man. The Bible records that there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist among those born of women. Zechariah's Magnificat was a song of praise to God, given by the father of John the Baptist. Then, why did he sing a song to praise God?
- First of all, he was a priest who served at the Temple of Jerusalem.

### the Gospel of Luke

**1:10 "When the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled by worshipers were praying outside.**

**1:11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.**

**1:12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear**

- While Zechariah was serving at the Temple, he became startled and gripped with fear. He had experienced worry and fear before he experienced God's grace. This was the beginning of God's story in his life. My friends, we sometimes experience

anxiety, dismay and fear in our lives, however, even in those times, we are able to praise God.

- Let's study what happened before the priest Zechariah gave "Zechariah's Magnificat" to God.

### Main Points

#### 1. God's Word of Promise

**1:13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.**

**1:14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,**

**1) The angel brought God's Word of promise to Zechariah. ⇒**

- ① A son will be given. (He and Elizabeth, his wife had no children for a long time. Their prayer was answered) And,
- ② God gave his son the name John.
- ③ John would be a joy and delight to Zechariah, and many will rejoice because of his birth.

#### 2) The work of John the Baptist

**Luke 1:16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 1:17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**

- ① John invites the people back to the Lord their God.
  - ② John makes the people ready for the coming of the Lord.
- In fact, John the Baptist became the man to make straight the way of the Lord in the wilderness. He appeared before the coming of the Messiah (the Savior) and became an instrument to prepare the way for Him.
  - By the way, God's master plan was revealed through His Word and these promises were actually fulfilled by John the Baptist. The Bible contains many such Words of promise. God gave *the Words of promise* to show us His plans and His will. The greatest promise is ⇒ the Messianic prophecies

①The savior will born at an expected time.

②His name will be called Jesus.

③He will be a joy and delight to many people.

These three things were fulfilled when Jesus Christ was born. The Birth of Jesus is Christmas.

- Then, how did Zechariah receive the message from Gabriel, the angel of the Lord?

#### 2. Zechariah's Response to the Lord

**1:20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.**

- He became silent until the day he named John. This penalty was caused by his unfaithfulness; "He didn't believe the angel's words." It was a warning from God. But, why did a person such as Zechariah lack faith in God?

My friends. What does it mean to believe in God? As a priest of Israel who served in the temple, Zachariah was a man who was close to God. He must have studied Judaism and was a well-learned man. He also was from the tribe of the Levites whose duty it was to serve God. Based on these things, there seems no reason to doubt his faith. In

the eyes of the people, Zachariah was a perfect priest.

- Even so, he couldn't believe *the Word of promise* when the angel spoke to him in a supernatural way. We learn here that the faith *is not the matter of human knowledge or his judgment* and it isn't matter of how great he is or how much experiences he has.

**The Bible says, "Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:13)**

- Let's remember that there were many teachers of the Law, scholars and learned people in the days of Jesus. Most of them didn't believe in Jesus. Today, many intelligent people and persons of status say that they can hardly believe the Words of the Bible. What is faith, then?  
⇒ It is trust in God that is not external but deeply internal.

- Let's remember *Abraham's faith*. 「

**"He (Abraham) credited it to him as righteousness." Genesis 15:6**

- **"Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Hebrews 11:6**

God wanted Zachariah to have that kind of faith. However, his faith didn't work, as we know from his response to the angel.

- However, his attitude encourages us, for God fulfilled His master plan for Zachariah. God made his plan good and chose him as the father of John the Baptist. Here we understand God's grace, choice and blessing. *Zachariah's Magnificat* was born from his experience of weakness.
- My dear friends! We are not chosen because we are better than other people. It was only by God's grace, mercy and blessings. How happy we are! God makes use of our weaknesses, our mistakes and unfaithfulness. However, please don't misunderstand that unfaithfulness is acceptable. We should live righteous lives before God. God *willingly* makes our weaknesses (a minus point) change into our strong point (a plus point).

### **3.The Fulfillment of the Lord's Promise**

**1:62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child.**

**1:63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John.**

**1:64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.**

*Zachariah's Magnificat.*

- Let's summarize what we studied now.

**1) First, he has given the Words of promise through the angel.  
(Revelation)**

- ② However, he didn't believe the Words of the angel. (His response)
- ③ Nevertheless, God's promise was fulfilled. (God's grace)

**2) God's fundamental principles (Rules)**

- ① God fulfills His promises. (Therefore, He is trustworthy.)
- ② *The Lord has provided.* Zechariah was a weak man like us. Nevertheless, *the Word*

*of promise* was fulfilled. We are also called by God. The living God still speaks to us *the Word of promise*.

⇒ God's *Word of promise* will be absolutely fulfilled.

### 3) What does God ask us?

#### Simple (Obedient) Faith

What is this faith like?

- ① *Faith like a mustard seed*: **the Gospel of Mark**

**4:31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth.**

**4:32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.**

- ② *Faith that moves mountains*: **the Gospel of Mark**

**11:23 "Truly, I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea and do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you say will happen, it will be done for you.**

- The two verses above teach us that it is possible to accomplish impossible things through faith. In the case of Zachariah, ***It is true and Amen.***

- Christmas is coming soon. The birth of Jesus Christ is a wonderful miracle.

Mary, who was a virgin, gave birth to Jesus. ⇒ Those who receive it in *faith* are blessed. It is impossible to believe without faith.

- The faith isn't given through blood lines or genealogy. It is not given by knowledge or situations or effort. People can't give faith. Faith is only given by God's *grace*. Therefore, we should receive *the Words of God* with joy.

**{ Illustration } God's Calling Word Given to Me and My Present Life after 41 Years of Ministry**

- **The Lord gave me the Word below when I was a student in Germany in 1976. That was the Deuteronomy chapter 28.**

**Deuteronomy 28**

**28:1 If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I gave you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.**

**28:12 The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none.**

**28:13 The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the Bottom.**

- When I look back my life, I realize that His Word was true.

What do you think today's message?

Do we receive *the Word of God* by faith?

#### Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Praise Be to The Lord!"

—Zechariah's Magnificat—

- The priest Zechariah heard the Words of the angel. At that time he couldn't give praise to God right away; he went the long way round. However, he finally worshiped God and gave the magnificat to Him.

The way he walked⇒

- He was chosen by God and was given the Word of promise. (Revelation)
- He didn't accept the Word of the angel. (His Response)
- The Word of promise was fulfilled. (God's Grace)
- We didn't believe in the Words of the Bible at first, yet when the timing of God was fulfilled in our lives, we became *the ones who are praising God*.
- What "magnificat" do we give God on this first Sunday of Advent? I hope you will put your name instead of Zachariah. I pray that I give Kuroda's Magnificat today, the first Sunday of Advent.

\* God bless you!