

The Weary World Rejoices

Study 1

1. Australians are particularly good at coining new words to suit the moment. The Australian National Dictionary Centre has pronounced 'strollout' as the word of the year referring to the national vaccination rollout. Other words that registered highly included 'iso', 'double-vaxxed'. What words would you use to describe how Australians are feeling now?

Luke 1:5-25

2. For the period between the Old Testament and the birth of John and Jesus, around 400 years, there were no prophets or messages from God. What are some of the responses Christians have when God seems silent?
3. This passage was written in the time when Herod has been appointed puppet King over Judea by the Romans who occupied the land. Herod was a Jew by religion but not by birth. He was politically savvy in a time of political intrigue and dangerous liaisons and was barbarically cruel to his enemies. However, he was passionate about building leaving a legacy of impressive buildings including the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple. V5 What do you know of the mood of the Jewish people at this time of occupation?
4. Elizabeth and Zechariah were said to be upright in the sight of God? V6-7 What does this mean? What was their personal weariness?
5. Zechariah was chosen to offer incense to God in the Holy Place within the Temple. This was a once in a lifetime honour and done on behalf of all the Jewish people. In what way did his experience bring new hope both personally to Zechariah and for the Jewish people in their weariness? V8-17
6. Despite being upright before God Zechariah was terrified at the sight of the Angel and doubted the promise of a son. Can you see the humanness of his faith and the humour of God in Zechariah's punishment? V11-12, 18-22 Have you seen God's humour over the last year?
7. The name of the promised child was John which means 'graciousness of God'. How did the grace of God play out for Zechariah and Elizabeth personally and for the Jews as the people of God? V13-17
8. In what way does the story of Christmas (Advent) bring hope and the promise of grace to us and our weary world?

Pray together

Giving thanks for the hope and grace we have in Jesus Christ pray for each other and the weariness that impacts us preparing for Christmas.

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Study 2

1. What are some of the disappointments and cancellations you have experienced over the last couple of years? Do you agree that the world is experiencing 'hope fatigue'?

Luke 1:26-38

2. In what way might the Jews of Luke's time have experienced 'hope fatigue'? How long had they been waiting for the Messiah (see also Is 7:14; Mic 5:2)?
3. What are some of the hints in Luke chapter 1 that the angel's message was world changing (see v11 & 28; 20 & 35-37; 28-29)?
4. Mary is said to be a virgin (v27, 34) and pledged to be married (v27). What is the problem for Mary? How does the angel respond to her?
5. What problem does Mary's virginity present for us in understanding the story? How do we answer these problems?
6. We are used to leaders not keeping their word/promise? What assurance does Mary have that the promise made to her would be kept? (See V35-37)
7. What was Mary's response to the angel? (v38) What enabled her to make such a commitment? (See v28, 35. See also 2 Pet 1:16-21)
8. In what way does the promise to Mary bring hope to us and our weary world? How does this hope differ from other hopes we might have?

Pray together

Giving thanks for the assurance of God's word, the Holy Spirit given to us and his power at work in our lives. Pray for his enabling in us to be his willing servants.