

In Times of Darkness

Scripture Reading — Luke 1:5-7

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah . . . his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. — Luke 1:5

King Herod (the Great) was associated with unspeakable crimes against humanity. During his rule, he killed members of his own family and many Jewish leaders, and he even massacred all the boys under age two in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:13-18).

Herod's actions meant the very worst of times, and Luke understood that. Luke was not drawn to glitzy celebrities, powerful officials, or ambitious CEOs. He focused on outcasts, old people, and foreigners, for the good news of Jesus was a surprise in God's unfolding plan to change the world.

To begin telling Jesus' story, Luke introduced Zechariah and Elizabeth, upright people who engaged in ordinary life with extraordinary holiness and prayer.

They had tried for many years to have a child. But now that they had reached old age, all hope for parenthood seemed lost. They had lived to please God, and yet God hadn't blessed them with a child.

We often wonder why it seems God doesn't bless people who try hard to do his will, perhaps especially in troubling times. But God's blessing can't be earned or demanded. It comes as a surprise, a gift, by no effort of our own. It's there in God's daily love and care for us—and then sometimes God pierces our hearts with bolts of amazing grace to increase our capacity for faith, hope, and love.

Prayer

Lord, may your grace amaze me. Help me hand over my failed dreams to you by faith, and to trust in you always. Amen.

Written by Reginald Smith — <https://today.reframemedia.com/authors/reginald-smith>

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