

## God is my Hero

*“In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron. And her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.*

*...the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you shall have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord....’*

*And Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years. And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 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 proper time.”*

*Luke 1:5-7,13,18-20*

Imagine Gabriel’s thoughts when God tells him that the good news he will bring to Zechariah will not be believed!

Gabriel—who stands in the presence of God— and whose name means *God is my hero*, was sent to tell Zechariah that his prayer had been answered. This mighty messenger of God was bringing astonishingly good news straight from the throne room of God, the long-awaited answer to a heart cry from a childless couple. And the news was more than good. Not only were their prayers answered for a child, but they were to be given a son, a son who would bring them joy and delight, a son who would be great in the sight of the Lord, a son who would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, a son who would bring people back to the Lord, a son who would prepare the way for Messiah!

The answer that Zechariah and Elizabeth longed for in their desire to be parents was so much bigger than they could have imagined. Maybe Zechariah didn’t believe because his perspective was so small. His desire for a child was for himself and Elizabeth, to provide a legacy and fill *their* emptiness. Zechariah never dreamed that God would use his longed for child to prepare the way for Jesus to come and fill the emptiness of all mankind.

Zechariah certainly didn’t expect such a personal answer, complete with a special delivery angel. He had most likely given up on this particular prayer. In his mind the time

had long passed for this prayer to be answered. He probably expected God to answer his prayer long ago, while he and his wife were still young, while they had energy, while all their friends were having children, not now when they were the age of most grandparents. That would have been a fine plan, much more logical! But God hardly ever does what is logical to us or what we expect. He goes far beyond our limited minds!

Much like I do, Zachariah and Elizabeth had likely mapped out the best way for God to answer their prayer and when the answer didn't follow their plan, unbelief resulted. Because of Zechariah's unbelief he was struck silent for nine months, unable to speak about the marvelous work God was bringing about for all of them. How many times does unbelief in my own heart result in silence instead of believing, trusting and proclaiming God and His amazing work in my life?

I wonder if Gabriel— who stands in the presence of God— and whose name means *God is my hero*, wondered, *how is it that Zechariah won't believe? Doesn't he grasp how great God is? Doesn't he know that God does what he says he will do? Doesn't he understand that God accomplishes his purpose regardless of the obstacles? Doesn't he realize that God's plan is so much bigger and better than what he wants?*

God tells us in his word that Zechariah was upright and observed the Lord's commandments blamelessly. He wasn't perfect, but he was part of the remnant of God's people who lived by faith. Yet still, he struggled with unbelief. What was so obvious to Gabriel, Zechariah missed because he was focused on the improbability and obstacles instead of on God with whom nothing is impossible. During those nine months of silence, Zechariah's sight was heightened and his focus turned to God, so that when his voice was restored the first sounds he uttered were blessing and praise for God, the hero who was bringing about the salvation of his people.

This Christmas, let us spend more time coming boldly to the throne room, in the presence of God, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, so that we can proclaim to all who will listen, God is my hero!

-Holli Worthington, December 2009