**Zechariah**

**Over the next couple of weeks, you will be learning a lot about the birth of Jesus in Sunday School…You will probably learn how an angel…not just any angel mind you…but the angel Gabriel himself…made a surprise visit to Mary.**

**You will probably learn that while visiting Mary…the Gabriel has some VERY SPECIAL news for her….and that news was…that she was going to have a baby…and that baby would be named Jesus.**

**You will probably learn that King Herod…the King at that time… made a law that required all men to travel to their hometowns to be counted in a census.**

**You will probably learn that while in Bethlehem…Jesus Christ…our Lord and Savior was born…**

**SOOO…although we WILL talk about those events…we are going to look at some different aspects of the Christmas story…some that you might not know so much about.**

**Now usually we learn about Elizabeth…the cousin of Mary.**

**And we learn about Mary…the mother of Jesus**

**But in Children’s Church, we aren’t going to look at the women so much…instead…we are**

**going to look at the men.**

**And the first man that we are going to look at is a man named Zechariah.**

**Can anyone tell me how Zechariah is related to Mary?**

**Zechariah is married to Mary’s cousin…whose name is Elizabeth.**

**So…Zechariah would be considered Mary’s cousin by marriage.**

**Zechariah was a priest…in fact…he and his wife Elizabeth were both from priestly families.**

**According to the Gospel of Luke, Zechariah served as a priest during the time of King Herod.**

**Both Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth observed ALL the commandments and ordinances that God had given them.**

**They were good and righteous people…loving and obeying God.**

**In the book of Luke, we read that Zechariah and Elizabeth were both getting up in years…which means that they were getting old…and God had not blessed them with children because Elizabeth was barren...meaning that she could not have children.**

**So Zechariah and Elizabeth filled their days with serving the Lord…serving the people…and serving in the temple.**

**At the temple in Jerusalem, the priest’s duties alternated between the priests.**

**Some days certain priests would serve in the temple…and other days other priests served in the temple.**

**Now on this particular day…the temple duties fell upon Zechariah.**

**While Zechariah was ministering at the altar of incense, an angel of the Lord appeared before him**

**Now, this wasn’t some ordinary angel…this was the angel Gabriel…God’s special angel…the angel of good news.**

**And guess what kind of news Gabriel had for Zechariah?**

**Gabriel told Zechariah that he and his wife Elizabeth were going to have a son.**

**He also told Zechariah that this son was to be named John…and that he would be the forerunner for the Lord.**

**Now this was news that was hard for Zechariah to believe…why?**

**Because for one…He and Elizabeth were past the age of having children…and Elizabeth was barren.**

**But there is something else strange about what Gabriel told him…what did Gabriel tell him to name the child?**

**Gabriel told Zechariah to name this child John!**

**In Biblical days…people didn’t give their children just any old name…they gave them family names…in fact…they usually named them after their fathers.**

**So, this child should be named Zechariah…not John.**

**Gabriel also told Zechariah that this child would be a forerunner for the Lord.**

**Does anyone know what a forerunner is?**

**A forerunner is a person that proceeds…or goes before…the coming of someone else.**

**Sometimes a forerunner would speak of a sign or a warning of something that was about to come.**

**In this case…this child…John…would go before Jesus…warning the people that the Savior was coming and that they should repent and make their way straight.**

**Does anyone know who this John is? That’s right…he is John the Baptist…and he went before Jesus warning the people to repent and that Jesus…the Savior was coming.**

**Does anyone know how John the Baptist was related to Jesus? He was his cousin…and there were only six months between their ages.**

**Now when Gabriel spoke to Zechariah…Zechariah could not believe his ears…**

**Zechariah knew that he and Elizabeth were too old to have children.**

**He knew that Elizabeth was barren…and he knew that no one is his family was named John.**

**Because of his disbelief, Zechariah asked for a sign…**

**“How can I know that this is true Zechariah asked.”**

**Which was probably the dumbest thing that Zechariah had ever done.**

**“I am Gabriel” the angel replied, sent especially by God to make this announcement. But because you doubt…you will not be able to speak until after these things that I speak shall be performed.”**

**When Zechariah left the temple…he went out to the waiting worshippers…and he was unable to speak one single…solitary…word.**

**The people did not know all that had occurred in the inner temple…but they knew one thing for sure…Zechariah had seen a vision.**

**After returning to their home in Judah, Zechariah and his wife Elisabeth conceived just as the angel Gabriel had prophesied.**

**When Elisabeth has completed her fifth month of pregnancy, her cousin Mary was visited by the very same angel that had visited Zechariah…and he had some good news for Mary as well.**

**Gabriel told Mary that she was going to have a child…and that this child would be called Jesus.**

**Now Mary was just as surprised as Zechariah…but Mary’s response was not one of disbelief…oh no…Mary knew that if God had chosen her to be the mother of the Savior…then she would be the mother of the Savior…but she did ask questions.**

**She didn’t have questions of doubt…her questions were more about details…kind of like “Ok…I understand but give me some details…tell me what to expect?”**

**Mary wanted details…she knew that she was a virgin…which meant that she had never been romantic with a man…she knew that because she had not been romantic with a man then she couldn’t get pregnant.**

**So, in other words, she was saying “Ok, I believe you…but tell me how this is going to take place”**

**Gabriel told Mary that she would be overshadowed by the Holy Ghost and …even though she would remain a virgin…she would become pregnant with Jesus.**

**Which means; that God would just place that tiny baby inside Mary; even though she had never been romantic with a man.**

**And that is exactly what happened…**

**After receiving the visit from Gabriel, Mary decided to travel to Judah to visit her cousin Elisabeth...whom the angel Gabriel had told her was expecting a child as well.**

**As Mary approached the home of Elisabeth and Zechariah…the baby…baby John…who was inside of Elisabeth’s stomach…leapt.**

**Even though the two babies had not even been born yet…John…recognized the Savior…he knew that he was in the presence of the Lord.**

**Mary remained with Elisabeth and Zechariah for about three months before she returned to her own house…and during this whole time…Zechariah had been unable to speak.**

**BUT….8 days after Elisabeth gave birth, and their son was to be circumcised and given his name…something amazing happened.**

**As all the cousins and neighbors and friends gathered around to celebrate the naming of the child…and as they were guessing as to what the name of the child would be…Elisabeth spoke up and said his name was going to be John.**

**Now this caused quite a stir…what was Elisabeth saying?**

**This child’s father was Zachariah…not John.**

**What are you saying Elisabeth they asked…who is this John that you are naming the baby after?**

**They were making a horrible fuss and arguing among themselves…when finally, someone said**

**“This is ridiculous…Zechariah won’t stand for this…let’s ask Zechariah what this child’s name will be….”**

**So, someone took a writing table to Zechariah, and he wrote upon the tablet "His name is John".**

**And as soon as Zechariah named the child…he regained the power of speech, and blessed "the Lord God of Israel"**

**And John… grew up and *became strong in spirit* but remained in the deserts of Judah until he assumed the ministry that was to earn him the name "John the Baptist.”**

