

Weekly Gospel Readings

The 1st Sunday of Kiahk

Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

On this first Sunday of the blessed month of Kiahk (12/10/2023), the church's Gospel reading is from [Luke 1:1-25](#). While we do in part read about the purpose of writing the Gospel of St. Luke in [\(vv.4\)](#) we also notice the primary focus of the Gospel is the annunciation of the birth of St. John the Baptist to his barren mother Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah* the priest, whom both were elderly.

In verse 6, we read “And they [Elizabeth and Zechariah] were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord” [\(Luke 1:6\)](#). Further on, we read that Elizabeth was barren and elderly [\(v. 7\)](#), which implies that she could not have a child. But the Archangel Gabriel says, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son” [\(v. 13\)](#). And she eventually successfully bore St. John the Baptist. This is a powerful example of how God hears and answers the prayers of those who are faithful to him. Zechariah and Elizabeth were devout, and their prayers were heard.

This fact is even more evident later in the passage. The Archangel Gabriel says, “And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” [\(Luke 1:20\)](#). The Archangel Gabriel said that the prayers of Zechariah were heard [\(v. 13\)](#), but only after he showed doubt (a lack of faith) was Zechariah silenced. As [St. John Chrysostom](#) says, considering his own age, and moreover the barrenness of his wife, Zacharias* doubted; as it is said, And Zacharias said to the angel, whereby shall I know this? as if he said, “How shall this be?” And he adds the reason of his doubting; For I am an old man. An unseasonable time of life, an ill-suited nature; the planter infirm, the soil barren. But it is thought by some a thing unpardonable.

In multiple ways through this passage, there is the message of God hearing and answering the prayers of those who are faithful to him, a recurring theme in the Bible. May we continue to grow in faith so we may become closer to Him.

Resources:

Patristic Bible Commentary

Bible, English Standard Version

**: Through this article, the name “Zechariah” appears as is the spelling of the name in the English Standard Version. Other translations might use “Zacharias,” or “Zachariah.” But all these names refer to the same person (the husband of St. Elizabeth).*