

Weekly Gospel Readings  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Kiahk

**Birth of John the Baptist Foretold**

*“Your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son,  
and you shall call his name John.” [\(Luke 1:13\)](#)*

On this first Sunday of the blessed month of Kiahk, the church’s Gospel reading is from [Luke 1:1-25](#). In this passage, St. Luke begins by stating his purpose for writing the Gospel ([vv.4](#)) but the primary focus of the reading 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](#)). Despite their righteousness, Elizabeth was barren and elderly ([v. 7](#)), which implies that she is incapable of having 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](#)). In time, the promise was fulfilled, and Elizabeth conceived St. John the Baptist. This becomes a powerful testimony that God hears the prayers of those who remain faithful to Him, even when the circumstances seem impossible. As St. Augustine said: “Their prayer was heard not when they wished, but when God willed. Delay is not denial, but preparation for a greater mercy.”

This truth is made more evident later in the passage. Because Zechariah doubted the angel’s message, Gabriel declares, “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 angel explicitly affirmed that Zechariah’s prayers had been heard ([v. 13](#)), yet when the moment of fulfillment came, Zechariah hesitated in faith, and he was 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.

Through this passage the Church places before us a recurring biblical theme; that God hears and answers the prayers of those who are faithful to him.

May we continue to grow in faith, trusting that God is near to those who seek Him.

**Resources:**

Patristic Bible Commentary

Bible, English Standard Version

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture

*\*: 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).*