

What Child Is This?

On Sunday, we resumed our “Voices of Angels” sermon series by studying the words Gabriel spoke to Zechariah and Mary – and exploring the relevance of those words for us.

1. Warm-up Question: When you were a kid, imagining your future, what did you dream of being or doing? Do you feel like you have achieved your destiny?
2. Read Luke 1:5-17. This reading tells us about the miraculous conception of John the Baptist.
 - a. Elizabeth and Zechariah longed for a child. Many people do. How about you? How important (or not) was it (or is it) to have children?
 - b. If you have a child, what did you feel and experience when that child was born or first came into your home through adoption?
 - c. Describe the angel that appeared to Zechariah as you see it in your mind’s eye.
 - d. According to what the angel said, what was John’s destiny? How do you think Elizabeth and Zechariah felt about their son’s destiny?
3. John was sent into the world by God on a special mission for specific purposes. But the Bible suggests that what was true of John is true of all of us. Psalm 139:13 says, “It was you, O God, who formed my inward parts. You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.”
 - a. The foregoing passage says that God “formed and knit” you in your mother’s womb. What are the implications of that?
 - b. The passage says that you were “fearfully and wonderfully made.” What are the implications of that?
 - c. The passage says that God wrote all the days formed for you before they even existed. Does that mean God has a plan for each of our lives? If so, how detailed is that plan?
4. Based on the words of Psalm 139, Jeff drew the conclusion that “each one of us is a child of destiny sent here by God on a special mission, just like John the Baptist.” But that then raises the question: So what is my special mission? For guidance, Jeff suggested we look to the words Gabriel spoke to Mary. Read Luke 1:26-38.
 - a. In Luke 1:35, Gabriel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called *huios theos* [hwee-OS thee-OS].” *Huios theos* means

son/daughter/child of God. As Jesus grew up and Mary told him what the angel said about him, how do you think that affected Jesus? How would it affect you if your mother told you an angel said God sent you here to be *huios theos*?

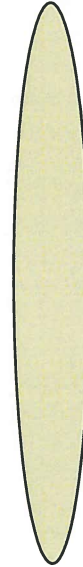
- b. Actually, the Bible does say exactly that about you. The exact same term Gabriel used about Jesus is applied to each one of us in Romans 8:14, which says, “All who are led by the Spirit of God are *huios theos*.” What do you think that means? In what sense are you called to be *huios theos*? How does that feel to you?
 - c. Romans 8:29 elaborates on this concept. It says, “Those whom God foreknew God also predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” Put this verse in your own words. What’s it saying?
4. Jeff summed up the foregoing verses by saying, “Each one of us has been sent here by God to be *huios theos*. In other words, we were destined to be a little brother or sister to Jesus, carrying forward the mission of Jesus in our own sphere of influence. You were meant to be Jesus to the people around you.” Jeff told a couple stories – one from the life of Louann Lowring and one from the life of Laura Poe – illustrating what it looks like when someone is Jesus to us or we are Jesus to someone. Who has been Jesus to you recently? To whom have you been Jesus recently?
5. When we think of greatness in life, we tend to think of being President, or the richest person, or a movie star, or the founder of the next Microsoft, or a great author or inventor. In other words, we think of being famous. But that’s a one dimensional way of seeing greatness. At the end of a book describing his wide travels, author Larry McMurtry returns in his memory to the little town where he grew up in east Texas. He tells how his father had lived his entire life within the same 30 square miles. As he tells about his father’s life, McMurtry has a flash of insight. Instead of pitying his father, he realizes that they have simply lived two different kinds of equally good lives.
- a. McMurtry says, “I have looked at many places quickly. My father looked at one place deeply.” What do you think he meant?
 - b. Famous people live very public lives. They have an opportunity to widely influence many different people, but at a relatively incremental level. Other people are called to live in one place deeply – to operate within a fairly tiny sphere of influence, but to have an enormously deep influence on that small sphere. Both get to share the same quantity of influence. The only difference is whether that influence is shared with a few deeply or with many more incidentally, as illustrated in the diagram on the next page.

Two Kinds Of Influence

Spread wide



Spread deep



- a. Name a famous person whose work in life has had a positive impact on you. What has the impact been?
- b. Name someone who has “lived in one place deeply” who has had a powerful impact on you. What has the impact been?
- c. Jesus said, “Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.” Matthew 19:30. What do you think that means?
- d. If given the choice to live deep or wide, which kind of life would you rather live – and why?

6. Not many of us can be famous. Instead Jeff encouraged us to focus on living deeply in within our own sphere of influence – to strive to be the kindest person in our workplace, or the most pleasant person in the grocery line, or the most forgiving person in our family. Suppose that’s your destiny – to live deeply in your own sphere of influence – to be *huios theos*, i.e., Jesus, in your own little corner of the world. How does that feel to you? What one word would you use to describe how you feel about your destiny?

“See what love God has given us, that we should be called sons and daughters of God; and that is what we are.” I John 3:1.