



REVIVE!

Light in a messenger's eyes brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones.

Proverbs 15:30

Make the most of every opportunity to share good news. St Luke uses the words, good news, nineteen times, between his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

In the two birth narratives Luke records, both have angelic announcements of GOOD NEWS. One is much better known than the other.

To the shepherds, the fringe people of the day – they believed the angel; *'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people.'* (Luke 2:10). We know the story well.

To Zechariah, a devout Priest – he didn't believe the angel; *'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and I have been sent to speak to you and tell you this good news'* (Luke 1:19). Gabriel is speaking about the birth of the forerunner – the one who is to prepare the way for Jesus. John's birth announcement is eclipsed by the Jesus's but is no less heart-warming and inspiring – that's what good news can do. Take time to reflect on the story of John's birth;

maybe imagine being a character in the story at the Temple or at their home. (I think it's quite humorous)!

Luke's Gospel records the good news that Jesus and the kingdom of God is to be proclaimed 'to the poor'. Who are these poor – is it those who have some 'poverty of life' rather than the 'quality of life' this good news promises?

In Acts, the emphasis of the promised and now fulfilled good news (13:32-33) has developed; Jesus is the Messiah (5:42); peace (10:36) and grace (20:24) come through Jesus Christ; and Jesus is proclaimed as resurrected (17:18). All such good news!

In this season of waiting and remembering good news, it is good to reflect on the stories within this REVIVE. May your joy overflow this Christmas as you recall your own journeys of faith, and look how far you have come!

Grace and peace to you this Christmas, with our love from all at CCHC,


Steve

Good news!

Bad news sells newspapers and makes TV headlines, but good news so often doesn't get a mention! "*For most folks, no news is good news; for the press, good news is not news!*" Gloria Berger

Here are a few 'good news' quotes for you to reflect on:

- ▶ ***Turn around and believe that the good news that we are loved is better than we ever dared hope, and that to believe in that good news, to live out of it and toward it, to be in love with that good news, is of all glad things in this world the gladdest thing of all. Amen, and come Lord Jesus.***
Frederick Buechner
- ▶ ***When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, "Now is that political or social?" He said, "I feed you." Because the good news to a hungry person is bread.***
Desmond Tutu
- ▶ ***God is even more committed to your change, your growth, and your transformation than you are!***
Kevin DeYoung
- ▶ ***The Gospel is 'Good News', not 'Good History', because when it's preached, it happens.***
Reinhard Bonnke



**Jesus does
not just bring
good news;
He IS the good news!**

Timothy Keller

Abraham and Sarah

Abraham and Sarah are good examples of faith-filled people who struggled with waiting for 25 years for the fulfilment of a promise.

Abram and Sarai (as they were then) were past child bearing age when God promised that Abram would be the father of a great nation. Over time, Abram reminded God the promise was still unfulfilled, and God repeated and expanded it each time, (eg the child would be a son, and child of both Abram and Sarai).

There were various attempts by Abram to hasten the fulfilment of God's promise including the suggestion of an alternative heir, and then, encouraged by Sarai, Abram had a son by her servant, another alternative heir, but this ended badly. God still remained faithful to His promise.

I suspect Abram felt that he was waiting for God, yet I wonder if it was God who was waiting for Abram? Waiting for Him, and Sarai to grow in obedience and mature in faith, to trust Him to fulfil the promise, and let go of trying to do it himself.

The truth is we don't like waiting – but we might recognise that God does His best work in us while we wait – if we allow Him. God is not in a hurry, even when body clocks march on and impatience builds! Waiting can draw us into a different way of being and trusting if we allow it.

At the appointed time, Isaac was born but only after a significant event, indicating God's anointing was upon them both (Genesis 17: 3-17).

AbraHam and Sarah

It is their name change by the insertion of the 5th letter of the Hebrew alphabet (ha), meaning breath/sigh. This letter is generally interpreted as the breath of God, signifying the anointing of the couple by the breath of God, the Holy Spirit. Thus, Isaac was born to prepared and anointed parents, who went on to be the blessing and the father of nations as God had promised.

Suzanne

John the Baptist

*The time has come," he said.
"The kingdom of God has come
near. Repent and believe the
good news!"* Mark 1:15



The birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1) reminds us of much older stories. Isaac (Genesis 21), Samson (Judges 13) and Samuel (1 Samuel 1). Three children, like John, born by God's intervention to elderly parents. And Elijah comes to mind too. Is John the Baptist to be a new Isaac, a new Samson, a new Samuel and a new Elijah? Yes!

**God had been silent for 400 years –
imagine the waiting!**

But in this announcement, God reminds Israel:

- ▶ *I still keep my promises (Isaac);*
- ▶ *I still deliver from oppressors (Samson);*
- ▶ *I still desire religious purity (Samuel);*
- ▶ *I still use prophets to call and guide people (Elijah) and,*
- ▶ *I still want to be with you and have you with me.*

John's message, to kings and paupers, Jews and Gentiles, religious leaders or lay people was loud and clear. REPENT! Change the way you are, act, and think.

John also proclaimed; *the good news is that there is One among you (Jesus), greater than me and He wants to immerse you in God, so that you can live with Him in God's Kingdom.* Is John's message still relevant today?

Jesus said; *'I tell you, among those born of women there is no greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.'* (Luke 7:28) That's us – what a lovely gift – enjoy it!

Mary

Waiting is jolly hard! Waiting for a NHS operation in these days, or for an answer to prayer that seems a long time coming, is so testing!

At Christmas, Christians are challenged to wait afresh, expectantly welcoming the God who came in the person of Jesus, who will come at the endtimes with great glory, and who comes now into our present circumstances.

Mary's waiting was challenging. She waited for the Saviour's arrival during her pregnancy but faced much social ostracism as an unmarried mother. After the birth, Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul (Luke 2:35). Imagine the dread of what that meant through the years, finally to see her son brutally crucified. There would have been moments of joy seeing Jesus grow, but also confusion when, for example, during his healing ministry, the family went to call him home thinking he was 'out of his mind' (Mark 3:21,31; see also Luke 2:48).

Acts 1:14 finds Mary still waiting, this time with other disciples for the Holy Spirit to be poured out. She was not disappointed as thousands were soon dynamited into God's kingdom. Hers was a life time of waiting, through much joy and difficulty.

She couldn't have done it without the words of God as He came to her at the beginning of her journey – words of grace, God saying '*I love you*', and a promise that He would always be there with her (Luke 1:24). Take a moment to hear God speak these words into your present circumstances.

**He has come;
He will come and
He comes to you
today!**

David

Prayer and Fasting

A call to fast from Steve, Senior Chaplain
I feel the Spirit is leading us, those who prayerfully support CCHC, to fast. Not a fast of repentance (inward) which shows sincerity in seeking needed forgiveness, or a fast of lamenting (outward) expressing a heart of faith toward God in difficult circumstances, but a fast to seek guidance and favour from our Lord (forward). *'We pray for daily bread, and in times of special need, we reach for the prayer-amplifier called fasting.'* (DM see below)

All fasting draws us closer to God and that is a common thread in fasting. A Christian fast is unique in that whilst it highlights a need, it can also point us to what we already have. We cry out for more of Christ Jesus and His favour in the full knowledge that by His promise we are filled with Him already, and that His favour toward us is assured, in His time! *'Fasting is a statement — in the very midst of our need — that we are not empty.'* (DM)

I am asking that you please particularly join us in prayer between 6th January (Epiphany) and 18th January (first day of Week of prayer for Christian Unity) and to use one or more of those days to fast, as the Spirit leads you. You may fast from screens, daily newspapers or food, whilst taking care of your health. You may also fast by taking something on.

Please pray and fast for the following intentions:

- ▶ for more of our Lord through us and the work at CCHC;
 - ▶ for guidance of the Lord going forward for CCHC;
 - ▶ and crucially for financial favour for the critical situation CCHC is in financially.
- Thank you for joining with us.

(Some notes on fasting above adapted from a brilliant article by David Mathis, Why do Christians fast; desiringGod.org)

Prayers of Intercession

- ◆ Please give thanks for the way the Lord uses CCHC to love, heal and empower people. Recently we've seen people arrive desolate, broken and lost and leave restored, healed and with new purpose! God is so good.
- ◆ Recent donations, thank God, have seen us into December. Please pray that this Christmas, God opens his storehouse and pours his gifts of peace and prosperity on his work here. Our prayer is that God restores not just a three-month cushion but gives CCHC a fourth month too.
- ◆ Please pray with thanks for all our staff and volunteers that as we bless guests, friends and family over Christmas, we will also be blessed, protected and know God loves us, as He does you.

Changes to REVIVE Newsletter

Thank you for encouraging us with your messages of thanks for our monthly issue of REVIVE! The first copy was published in April 2020 following the enforced closure of CCHC due to Covid lockdowns. Its purpose was to be a monthly encouragement to folk during this difficult time and we thank you, Lord that it has blessed so many people.

Unfortunately, due to a very busy November, we were unable to produce the newsletter. However, during this time we have had the opportunity to review some of our ministry practise here and have decided that following December's issue, we will produce REVIVE bi-monthly, with the next issue in February.

Please continue to pray for Steve, David and Mary who have the responsibility for producing the newsletter, thank you. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless you through it.

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