

Alley Rundown—December 4th, 2022

Today's Bible Story: Breath of Heaven (Zechariah/Elizabeth and Gabriel/Mary) • *Luke 1:5-66*

Today's Key Question: What's the most amazing thing you've ever seen?

Today's Bottom Line: Anything is possible with God

Monthly Memory Verse: *Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.* Luke 2:11 (NIRV)

CG: Dude Perfect Filler Videos

“Hey, everyone! So glad that I can be with you today. I don't know about you, but I love this time of year! Last week we talked a bit about some of your Christmas traditions, and a GREAT tradition that many of you had was driving or walking around your neighborhood and seeing the different lights and decorations people have put up where they live. And it seems like every year there's that one house that just goes crazy with Christmas lights—like their electric bill must quadruple for the month of December. Any of you have a place like that near where you live? I see those hands! We have a few, too. I thought it'd be fun to do a quick internet search for extreme Christmas light designs. And . . . well, check THESE out!

SLIDES: Images of extreme house decorations

Provide commentary throughout the images of extreme Christmas decorations.

“Those are intense, right?! It's amazing what people will do to go out of their way to celebrate Christmas. Personally, I love it! It's like you can't look at these or drive past decorations in your neighborhood and NOT feel some sort of joy about the Christmas season, right? Of course, we know that Christmas isn't about all the lights and presents and decorations, but you have to admit that Christmas lights just make you happy and look forward to Christmas morning.”

“But can I be honest for a second? In a season that's so full of joy, why does it seem sometimes like joy can be the last thing we can find during Christmas? Maybe it's the busyness of the shopping and parties and family gatherings. Maybe it's a situation at home or at school that feels impossible and we're unsure of the future. Or maybe life just isn't going the way you expected it to go and you're just not feeling too joyful right now. What then? How can we find joy and remember all that's good, not just about the season of Christmas, but also what's good about God?

“First of all, it's okay to be sad about things that happen to us. We need to feel our feelings, even at Christmas time. Second of all, it's okay to have these questions. Life can be tricky, and God is more than big enough to handle even our toughest questions about life. On top of all that, while we might not always find the answers that we want, we have a great place to start: The Bible.

“Remember, the Bible was written by all sorts of people who experienced the power of God in their lives. God inspired people to write down those experiences so people like us can learn from them and discover God's love for ourselves . . . including how we can find joy when life is hard. Let's take a look at a couple of stories that talk about that.”

“Last week we talked about a big promise God had made through a prophet named Isaiah. Before that, you might remember how in the beginning, out of love, God made an amazing world. But sadly, people turned away from God and the world became broken . . . the world needed a Rescuer. God made a plan to bless the whole world through Abraham and the family who was going to come through him . . . you remember them, they were called . . . the Israelites. But over and over again, it seemed like the people were just resisting God and His plan for them. During the time of the kings, both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah were conquered by foreign empires. But before they went into exile, and while they were there, God spoke to them through prophets about a Rescuer. And even though many people came back to what remained of Israel after captivity, I’m sure they had questions. Big questions. And to top it off, there was a long period of time when nothing happened. God made lots of promises about a Rescuer, but for hundreds of years, the Rescuer didn’t come. But make no mistake . . . God was still working and getting ready to reveal what had been planned all along.

“Today, we find ourselves in the New Testament of our Bible. And during this time, God’s people were ruled by yet *another* empire: the Romans. Honestly, it was hard to find a lot of joy. And for one couple, joy seemed especially hard to find at times. Let’s check it out with the help of this week’s Episode.”

CG: Lesson Video (Runtime: 14:00)

“You know, this story is filled with moments that seem quite unlikely—impossible even. Elizabeth and Zechariah having a kid in their old age? Or Mary, an ordinary girl from Nazareth, chosen to be the mom to the Savior of the world?! Then you had the angel visits and God choosing humble people from the middle of basically nowhere to put an incredible plan into motion.

“When it comes to situations in our life though, it’s sometimes easy for us to believe that God should work this way or that way. Maybe we start to believe that God CAN’T do it like this or like that. But the Bible is filled with stories that prove how God can often make impossible things possible, leaving people in the wake who can only respond with amazement and wonder and joy at what just happened . . . and ultimately, this response isn’t to what happened, but to God who made it happen.

“Maybe you have something going on right now in your life—a friend thing, a family situation, a personal struggle—and your first instinct is to simply say, ‘THIS one is too big for God’ or ‘No WAY God can do anything with this one.’ But remember, God has a pretty long track record of doing impossible things. It doesn’t always mean that God will do them exactly the way you want to or how you ask, but it does mean that God can be trusted with what seems impossible. And no matter what is happening—Christmas time or any other time of the year—that’s enough to spark joy!”

“As you head to groups, think about this question:

SLIDE: Key Question

“**[Key Question]** What's the most amazing thing you've ever seen? What was your reaction? Or the reaction of the people around you? How does that amazing thing compare to the moments we read together today? What do those moments tell you about God? Those are some big questions, so if you need help thinking through them, no worries! You’ll talk more about this in Small Group. Your Small Group Leader would love to chat with you about any of it! Before we head out, let’s pray and thank God for being powerful enough to do the impossible. Let’s pray.”

OFFERING:

As some of you may already know, we are highlighting some of our Parkview Global Missionaries from the beautiful country of Mexico. Here is a picture of our Missionary Friends Eli and Mandy Garcia!

CG: Eli and Mandy

Parkview has spent many years developing a very important partnership with an organization called Vida Nueva Ministries in Mexico. This group has been working in many of the under-resourced areas to plant churches, start schools, and care for the amazing people of Mexico. Here's a picture of some of the kids at the school down in Mexico.

SLIDE: Kids at School (Image 6620)

So if you brought an offering today, you can bring it up now knowing that it is going to help a lot of people just like you in the great country of Mexico!