

Preparing for a Surprise

- **Advent-** 4wks leading up to Christmas when we prepare for arrival of Jesus
- **Last words of OT-** See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.
- **Followed by 400yrs of silence**

Similarities between Zechariah and Mary



- Visited by angel Gabriel
- Given surprising news that they were going to have a baby
- Given a fair amount of detail about their child
- Ask Gabriel a question
 - **Zechariah**- How can I be sure of (lit. know) this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.
 - **Mary**- How will this be since I am a virgin?

Would Expect Zechariah to be Better Prepared



■ Circumstances-

- **Zechariah-** married; prayed for children
- **Mary-** engaged, a virgin; children not on radar

■ Setting-

- **Zechariah-** Holy Place; chosen by God; divine task; atmosphere of prayer
- **Mary-** out of the way village; mundane

■ Result-

- **Zechariah-** child would have been celebrated as gift from God
- **Mary-** child would have been scandal, seen as result of sin



Maintaining a 'young' heart

- Matt 6.33- Seek first the Kingdom of God
- To seek first the Kingdom is to prioritize what God is doing in the world above what we are doing in the world
- Give to Kingdom of God-oriented things; where our treasure is our hearts will be



Maintaining a soft heart

- **Repent-** of any sinful choices that have contributed to our 'barrenness;' receive forgiveness from God
- **Forgive-** others whose actions contributed to our 'barrenness;' release them to God's judgment; (note- acknowledge disappointment with God)
- **Grieve-** what we've lost due to our 'barrenness;' mourn what wasn't