

Week 28

7/6/11

James: It is a joy to come into your home. Betty and I are sharing this week on The Great Omission from the Great Commission. Betty, I don't know that we could describe any more clearly from the Word of God the tragedy of omitting the greatest and most important aspect of the great commission. You don't want to miss it. Today is Wednesdays with Beth. Beth is talking about prayer and believing God. I'm telling you -- well, many times when I say that, I think I sense the spirit prompting and correcting saying, "No, God told me, he is telling you, the Word of God tells us that when we pray believe and that without faith it is impossible to please God." If you're going to approach God boldly, you come to him believing that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Beth understands that beautifully. You'll be blessed as Beth shares. Believe God and pray believing! Pray the word, believe what it says.

Begin video clip:

Beth: Luke chapter one, verses 5-17. Please, I ask you to just picture the whole scene as I read it.

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. **6** Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. **7** But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years. **8** Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, **9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

Let me stop here just long enough to tell you a little bit of what is happening. There were so many priests at this point in the nation of Israel in Herod's temple that maybe only one time in your life would the lot ever fall to you to be able to go and do what you had been trained all your life to do; that you'd be able to be the one to kindle the incense on the altar of incense before the holy of holies behind that heavy veil. So you're standing just this side of it. And there would be a group of people of God gathered out on the temple grounds that were waiting for the blessing. So they were

already out there. They believed that whatever was being prayed at that altar, whatever was being spoken by that priest as he kindled those coals before God and caused that fragrance to go up into the heavenlies, that they could stand out there on those grounds and they could say, "So be it, Lord." And that whatever would come as a blessing from that prayer at the altar would also somehow come to them as a corporate blessing with individual consequences. So they were standing out there just waiting for their blessing. So probably, this is the only time in the man's life he's gotten the chance to do this. And it's already told us he was well along in years. So at this point he has waited all of his life for his big moment and I want you to imagine it. So this is the day in verse 11:

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

Something I love about the way Luke writes is that he is very, very attentive to details. So when you are picturing this whole scene we have Zechariah coming in, an old man, picture him in his robes. He is kindling the coals on the altar of incense, standing before it, and then there appears to him an angel. Now here's what you need to understand because after he kindled the coals of the altar he would have gone down to his knees or perhaps even face down as some of the commentators explained it, before God to bring that intercession. So I want you to picture that it is probably when he is looking up -- maybe he started at the angel's feet and it went to the hem of his robe and then up and up and up until he saw the radiance of his face. It says then in verse 13:

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. **14** He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. **16** Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.

In other words, there was going to be a powerful influence on him that he did not want anyone else to confuse with wine, with anything... any kind of a substance that could cause something to take over a person. He wanted it to be obvious that the only thing filling this man and empowering this man was the Holy Spirit of the living God. Verse 17:

17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

And everything we're talking about in this present series is making ready for a fresh encounter with the Lord; the kind of thing that changes everything. I wonder when was the last time you had such an undeniable encounter that life just could not possibly go back to normal? That you had, because of God himself, a brand new normal; that's what I'm talking about here, preparing a way for the Lord. I want to give you a series of four points that we're going to put together through this emphasis on prayer out of Luke chapter one. And it begins with this right here, number one: blank. Jot it down. What was that point?

Audience: Be open to a fresh encounter.

Beth: Because let me tell you something that I have learned just from living and from many, many years of ministry, I have found along the way that the people that are less likely to have the fresh encounter, that thing happen that changes the entire aspect or normal of life as you know it, it is going to less often happen to someone who has had a long history with God than someone who is brand new to the whole thing because their eyes are like -- they're like astonished by the least little thing. I want us all, whether we're new to the thing or whether we've been seasoned in it for many, many years, we need a fresh encounter. We need to let God do a brand new thing in us. We want to be part of an adventure and God is all about taking you on an adventure. But what can happen is figure out how we want it and we don't want anything to change it. One of the traps that we fall into as Bible students is that we figure out what we believe and then we only read books that affirm what we already believed to be so. And for some of us, we haven't had a real live new idea come to us from the revelation of scripture in 10 solid years! Because we got comfortable with our doctrine years back and we decided that's all I want to know, that's all I need to know. So every one of our books are about the same thing instead of letting God -- this is a whole lot of book right here. Everybody say "a lot of Bible."

Audience: A lot of Bible.

Beth: This right here is a lot of Bible. He's got a lot to teach us. And one of the ways you know you're growing is if you realize somewhere along the way that you were wrong about what you used to think. When was the last time -- I mean he continued to speak such a fresh word over that you realize that that thing that you thought -- maybe even that thing that you taught wasn't even right. Every now and then I've gone, "What? What is that scripture doing there?" Like that really messes with my theology as I know it. I don't need you to be there. That's what I don't need. I don't need you to be there. Every now and then in my reading I'll be preparing for something and I'll know what I want to say before I ever go to the scriptures and then I go to get

scripture to reaffirm it to me and then I run into something that turns everything upside down. And suddenly, even if it messed me up it's a beautiful, beautiful experience, that fresh word from God, that fresh encounter that changes everything. We've got to be open to a fresh encounter. I've got to tell you something, one of the things that scripture goes out of its way to tell us about Elizabeth and Zechariah is that they were people who had lived with a ton of disappointment and these were blameless people. We're told explicitly in scripture that they had lived righteously and yet Elizabeth was barren. Talk about it being someone's fault, it was her. She could not bear a child and they lived with all this profound disappointment. I want to tell you something, this is not true of Elizabeth and Zechariah on this page in Luke one but it can be true of us. I've come to believe that you and I can get a stronghold of disappointment. We can just always expect it is not going to work out. It's not going to work out! "I could have known it was going to happen that way." "I should have known it would all fall apart." "I knew this was too good to be true." Where we get a stronghold of disappointment. In fact, we get our identity out of disappointment. We wrap the whole family up in our disappointment. Where we're constantly -- there is no meal good enough... There is no movie good enough... There is no friendship good enough... I had to tell a young mentee, a young woman that I was mentoring one time that was disappointed in relationship after relationship and the only reason I knew this is because I saw myself in her. I said, "You put so much pressure on a relationship nobody can live up!" So we get a stronghold of disappointment. What if you began to believe like a watchman on the wall, what if you placed your hope and your expectation in God, he is about to do something new! He is about to do something new! I pray that today, even in us going through this lesson together, that you'll get the sense on you, I pray that this is what God came to work, that you'll get that sense in your heart, God is preparing me for a fresh work. Something is about to happen. Something brand new! We've got to be open to it! We've got to be open to it. Number one was what?

Open to something brand new!

I don't know where we got into this habit but I think it is nearly across the board in church circles, somehow certainly in my upbringing the whole idea was put your troubles to the side and go to church. Okay, well, help me with that.

[Laughter]

So then we're going to get back in the car and there they are again, and we turn back into that other really scary family as soon as we leave church but while we're there we're this religious family and we've got it all together. But systematically, we

thought it through. Now we're going to leave our problems behind and we're going to go to church. Instead of we're going to lay our problems right there on the open page. Girlfriend and guyfriend, every time you open the scriptures, you just lay your problem right on it because God is going to speak to you in your very season. It is not a coincidence, if you hear something today that speaks right into the place that you are that's not you making too much of it. We'll never make too much of it! It is not a coincidence; it is Christ speaking into our ordeal. So what I want you to see here, I want you to notice something that is just huge to me in this scene. He comes in with this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I believe it could have been that he might have brought, we know for certain the corporate request; he made corporate intercession. They prayed, those priests, when they came to that altar, prayed for the kingdom to come. Not unlike we pray in the disciples prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." They prayed for the deliverer to come. They prayed for the Messiah to come every single day, every single time a priest stood at the altar. But if he was only going in one time, maybe he prayed a few other things while he was there. Maybe he thought, God doesn't only care about all of us, he cares about one of us! Just one! Just one! One at a time before God, bringing the corporate need but I got a need of my own. And just maybe, he was thinking to himself that his big moment had come while his wife was back home. They'd been married, just the two of them all of these years and don't you think just maybe he wished that she was there only she couldn't even get to the men's court! She would have been way out there. Having this big moment, maybe he mentioned her, maybe he didn't, but you can bet his heart was on her, and his mind was captured with what she might have needed as he prayed before the altar that day. I'm staying with one of the team for *LIFE Today* and *LIFE Outreach* while I'm here for the taping this week and I loved seeing a towel that is in her kitchen, I know it is bright white but I want you to see it, it says this: Jesus Loves You But I'm His Favorite.

[Laughter]

Yes, he does love you, he does love you, but the truth of it is, I'm his favorite. I want you to understand, do you know that is the essence of the favor of God? When the Word of God talks about grace being unmerited favor, when it says that God has had favor on you, every time that terminology is used or something that means that same word, it means that God sees you, God has a capability that parents do not have. God has the capability of loving each one of us as if we are his very favorite! That he has favoritism on each one of us. Do you understand what I'm saying to you? That's just huge. When my girls were little they would go, "Tell me, which one is your real favorite?" And I would go, "You are! You are! And so is your sister!" And they would go, "That's not fair! That's not fair!" That's the way it is -- it's the way it is! And you just

see that in the holy realm of God's love and devotion to us. He treats us with favor. Every time you go before the throne, you do get to bring what is just the desire of your heart and that lacking and that thing that you've so wanted. I don't know necessarily what he prayed while he was there but you just have to wonder, did he mention anything about her at all? I want to pitch back out to you that this was a day just like any other day in the life of the Israelites. There had been 400 years of silence. What would make today different from any other day? But that day when that man came in that place and stood at that altar, the mouth of God opened again through the angel Gabriel. I mean try to fathom somebody had been in it the day before, the day before that, the day before that, the day before that -- all these years of silence and suddenly, God opened his mouth to prepare a place for the Lord. And he says in verse 13, I think this is just amazing!

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.

I want to pause here and talk this through here for a second. Don't be afraid. Of course, there is first of all the fear of what he had seen. Do you know that Daniel also saw Gabriel and it terrified him so much he was nearly physically ill. So this is the same angel we have standing before Zechariah. So he is seeing the same kind of sight and Gabriel says, "Don't be afraid." I know that's what it means: Don't be afraid of the sight but I thought also about a deeper kind of very personal fear, that fear that our prayers are not being heard. That fear that it is working for somebody else but it is just not working for us; that kind of fear. I want you to see with me... what blows my mind here is he said, "Your prayer has been heard. Elizabeth will bear a son." Do you honestly think he prayed that that day? I don't. Why on earth would he? Don't you think at that point they would have been scared to death to have a baby. I mean like that time had come and it had gone. How recently, it is telling us, I don't want to get graphic here but it is telling us that she was well along in the years so that we would understand that the reproduction process could not take place. So I just ask you, do you honestly think that old man went into that altar that day and prayed for his wife to bear a son? I do not think so. I think what happened here is one of the scariest things on earth! And that is that some of our prayers are still like out there blinking before God and we're thinking to ourselves, I should have cancelled that one! I should have said, "I'm over that now. I want to cancel that one." They're still out there and here's what God began to show me that we never bring -- I want somebody to get this. Who needs this the most? Who needs this? Okay, all right, listen to me, we never bring a new request to the altar... everybody staying with me? What did I just say?

Audience: Never bring a new request to the altar...

Beth: That he does not remember the old one! Oh, is that good? Does it get better than that? You don't even have to mention the old one. Every time you bring the new one, he still remembers the old one. Every prayer you've got, there is this beautiful picture in Revelation chapter five where it says that they are holding up bowls of incense that are the prayers of the saints. You've got to know with me today, they're still out there. I need somebody to say they're in the bowl!

Audience: They're in the bowl!

Beth: Look at one another and say, they're still in the bowl!

Audience: They're still in the bowl!

Beth: He hadn't forgotten that. Every one of those... in fact, if you want it out of the bowl, I suggest you go back to the Lord today because you might go, get that one out of the bowl! Get that one out of the bowl! Get that one out of the bowl! Some of you are going to end up married to who you asked to be married to when you were eight. You don't want him! You don't want him! Go back and get that one back out of the bowl! But they're in the bowl! They're in the bowl! He remembers and they come up before him as live coals on that altar, bringing the savor. I mean it's one sniff away. Every prayer we've ever prayed, every time we pray something new -- what did I tell you? He remembers something old, every single time our prayers have been heard and that is number three. Believe that God has heard you.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: He does hear. He does not always answer exactly according to our request. We ask, keep asking. We knock, we seek; he answers. We respond, we trust, we believe him. Don't ever hesitate to ask. But know this, we are never going to be in control of God or all of life's circumstances; one of the reasons we must so desperately trust him, the shadow and the shelter of the almighty's presence all of the time. Betty and I this week are sharing the entire week on The Great Omission from the Great Commission. Jesus didn't just say, "Go into the world and preach." He said "make disciples of the nations and teach them to observe not some things but all -- all things." What does that look like? That's the journey we're taking you on. And I pray you'll get the series, The Great Omission from the Great Commission. You can get it on CD or DVD. We'll be

sharing it all week. Betty, I'm excited that we have an opportunity literally to transform lives by giving people what Jesus said "just a cup of water" in his name. He said you wouldn't lose a reward. What must it be like in the eyes of God when we give someone a well of water or participate in that? This is an exciting opportunity. Don't miss the privilege. You can give a cup of water or perhaps a well of water. This is the will of God and we will not lose the blessing of God on us. Don't try to tell God what it is, just release freely the life and love of God. Give a cup of water and trust God with the blessing.

James: You can put fresh water in that cup for that little child. You live kingdom life, his kingdom presence and you can give water in Jesus' name, you'll do it. I pray with all my heart that you'll want to reach out right now and dial that number. If your heart was broken, you said, "James, I really need someone to pray for me." You dial that number and you're going to have someone pray with you any time -- because God loves you. But if you'll dial that number now, you're saying, "God, I want you to use me, us as individuals, to show someone your love." And if you can drill a well -- now I know for some of you say, "Boy, James, that's a stretch. That's a big stretch!" -- \$4800! When Betty and I started helping drill wells it was a stretch but it was amazing how God promises that he will provide the ability to help to those who sow bountifully and freely. We're not talking about some gimmick. We're talking about people available to say, "God, trust me with the watch care of your resources and I'm going to do good with it." If you can drill a well, or you could drill several, I'm believing you will, but don't you take lightly making a gift of \$48 and giving ten people water for the rest of their life. For some of you say, "*That* may be a stretch." For those ten people it is life and the missionaries are going to tell them about where that love came from and about the love of God. \$144: 30 people water for the rest of their life. Many of our friends say, "I'm really stepping up!" And they'll give \$1200 or \$2400 and pray that three other people or another person joins with them and we've got a well. I know you're going to do what God leads you to do. I really believe that with all my heart! So I'm asking you to dial the number, take your bankcard and use it like a check. You can go online if you like, LifeToday.org and make your gift right now and you can just get up and go and do that -- and thank you for it. Or you write a check and make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're mailing it. Would you please? We're committed with your help and we can only do it with your help, to drill 415 more fresh water wells in 15 nations. Would you drill one? Would you drill part of one? Would you give as many people as possible fresh clean water?

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Every day millions of children are forced to make a dreadful choice, drink filthy, polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision. The good news is that there is a solution -- Mission: Water For Life is one of the most exciting and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. The suffering can end because clean water changes everything in life. With your support we will drill 415 new water wells in remote villages in 15 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people! A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10 people! \$72 will reach 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh clean disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime! In appreciation for your gift to help drill these new wells be sure to request the Kingdom Life Journal. This beautiful leather bound prayer devotional includes both Psalms and Proverbs, as well as a place to write your own reflections as God speaks to you through his word. Also please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request the journal as well as our beautiful commemorative bronze sculpture, "Heart of the Father." Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today!

End of clip**In the studio:**

James: You know if there is any way you can give a well I pray with all my heart you'll do it. So many of our viewers tell us the highlight of the year is drilling a well. You know, Betty, you and I started asking God to enable us to do that when it was \$3600. And then because it was so effective and our viewers wanted to share, we began to drill twice a year and we went to two gifts. Then it went to \$4800. I just want to tell you this, Betty and I asked God to let us do that. When it started it was a challenge. It's been amazing! It's been amazing to watch, not only the joy, the greater blessing of giving and receiving but to watch how God gives us the ability to keep sharing that which is pleasing to him. When you're doing it simply because you love him! I want to thank you. Make the very best gift you can because you really are giving the greatest gift. You're giving people a chance at life and we're going to tell them about Jesus. So you make that call or go online and make that special gift. We thank you so much for doing it! Be sure and ask for the DVD or CD, The Great Omission. You'll want to share this with others I'm sure.

Betty: He doesn't want to take away the difference that he created in us, James.

Announcer: The Great Omission from the Great Commission -- tomorrow on *LIFE Today!*