

What's in a Name?

- Who knows the meaning of their name?
 - the boy's name **Colin** is of Irish, Scottish and Gaelic origin, and its meaning is "young creature." Diminutive form of the medieval name Col or Colle, a short form of Nicholas (Greek) "people of victory." In Scotland, it has been used as an Anglicized form of Cailean (Gaelic)
 - the girl's name **Helen** is of Greek origin, and its meaning is "sun ray; shining light." Mythology: the abduction of Zeus's mortal daughter, Helen of Troy, resulted in the Trojan War. Hers was "the face that launched a thousand ships."
 - the boy's name **Malcolm** is of Scottish and Gaelic origin, and its meaning is "devotee of Saint Columba." The name of the prince of Scotland who became king after Macbeth murdered his father. Shakespeare's play was based on the true story.
 - the girl's name **Freya** is of Scandinavian origin, and its meaning is "highborn lady." Norse mythology: Freya was the goddess of love and fertility. Friday was named for her
- Names were regarded as significant, their meaning carrying weight
 - Zechariah: Yahweh remembers
 - Elizabeth: "my God is an oath/promise", or "my God is my abundance"
 - John: Yahweh is gracious
- These are the key characters in today's story - Zechariah and Elizabeth are John's parents:
 - John the son given by God as he had promised, and whose name God himself had chosen!

Prophecy Given

- Zechariah's song:
 - linked with the restoration of his speech at the circumcision ceremony
 - and sometimes called the Benedictus (from the first word of the song in an old Latin translation)
 - this song elaborates on how the birth of his son John relates to the Birth of the promised Saviour
- The language of the prophecy - for such it is - is thoroughly soaked in OT references
 - for example - the use of the word "redeem" (v.68) would have compared the new event to God's saving of his people from Egypt, showing that John's birth heralds a new exodus - an escape or delivery from sin
 - the "horn of salvation" (v.69) was reminiscent of the Psalms of David
 - there are allusions to the covenant, the great promise based contract between God and his people (eg, v.72/73)
 - there are further echoes of the prophetic writings of Israel and Malachi...

Prophecy Fulfilled

- Luke then goes on to show the prophecies not only of Zechariah, but also of Gabriel (vs.15-17, last week) were fulfilled in John
 - we've had vs.13 & 20 fulfilled already - a son born, named John, Zechariah made mute and restored to speech after his son is born...
 - **Zechariah's prophecy, Gabriel's prophecy**, and both of them echoing Malachi 3:1: "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty."
 - each of these prophecies point to John being one who will prepare the way, set the scene, plough the soil...
 - he would have a spiritual stature - people would recognise God in him - see v.80
 - he would have an uncompromising public ministry - again, forecast in v.80
- And Luke is careful to show that these prophecies were fulfilled:
 - if you look forward to Luke 3:3-18, Luke tells the story of the fulfilment of these prophecies
 - these are not merely the dreams of a grateful father...
 - nor the yearnings of an ancient prophet in a time of trouble...
 - these are the promises of God - and they are fulfilled
- John is one who:
 - prepares people spiritually for the coming of Jesus, by highlighting people's sin and the need for repentance and God to deal with that sin
 - has a prophet's courage, standing up against the authorities even when it resulted in imprisonment and ultimately death
 - Jesus himself calls the greatest man who had lived (7:28)
- John is the herald of Jesus, announcing his coming:
 - but John himself is announced, through Malachi, through Gabriel, and through his own father
 - in just the same way as those prophecies are fulfilled, Luke implies, so also will the far greater prophecies centring on the Saviour himself, also be fulfilled

The Challenge for Us

- The challenge for us is, in light of Jesus actual coming, his actual redemption of his people, the actual salvation he has brought to us:
 - in light of all that, how can we - like John - live uncompromisingly for God in a way that directs people to Jesus?
 - for example, are we too easily swayed by peer pressure in areas of materialism or lifestyle choice?
 - are we afraid of being unpopular and so fail to speak out when we see

dishonesty?

- are we so wrapped up in our own lives that we can't spare any energy for speaking out on issues of injustice in our society?
- do we crowd our schedules with so many activities that there is no time to stop and meditate on what God wants us to be, as well as to be doing?

- God fulfils his promises:

- he wants us to be - and we can be - confident about that
- and in that confidence to fulfil our Godly promise and potential