



## The Secret of Emptying...Control

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Pastor of Connection and Formation

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"KENOSIS" is the look *behind the scenes*... and the "secret" that can *change everything*!

**I didn't know that...** losing *control* leads to *disappointment*, but *emptying control* leads to *hope* (and *hope* changes everything)!

*Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all.*

Emily Dickinson

### Simeon's song (with God's lyrics)

*"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."*  
Luke 2:29-32

### So how do we sing a HOPE-FILLED tune this Christmas?

1. Decide now (like Simeon)... It's not *my job* to supply the lyrics to *God's song*.
2. As people who follow the *unexpected Messiah* (hey, who's in control here?), we've got to know (*you sense it don't you?*) that our hope is to be put in a *different direction*.
3. When *broken people* try to fix (aka "control") a *broken world*, they tend to *break it just a bit further*!
4. The song that is in your heart *is the song of Jesus*!
5. Keep your eyes *open to the unexpected*!

## The Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love

*"I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge uprightly."*

(Ps 75:2)

The appearance of angels during the Nativity of Jesus is extraordinary. How many people were visited by angels? Here is a summary list of angel activity.

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 1) <b>Zechariah</b> and a named angel                  | Luke 1:5-22     |
| 2) <b>Mary</b> and a named angel                       | Luke 1:26-38    |
| 3) Joseph, a dream, and a slight angelic clarification | Matthew 1:18-24 |
| 4) Shepherds and angels                                | Luke 2:9-14     |
| 5) Magi and dreams                                     | Matthew 2:1-12  |
| 6) Joseph, a dream, and an angelic warning             | Matthew 2:13-15 |
| 7) Joseph, more dreams and an angelic "green light"    | Matthew 2:19-23 |

The word *angel* (from the NT Greek, *angelos*) means messenger. We learn a little about the angel Gabriel when he delivers his assignments. We also learn about Mary, Zechariah, and his wife Elizabeth. Mary and the baby are the stuff of legend. Raphael's *Madonna and Child* exemplify how artists' hearts are captivated by the holy family. Zechariah has little name recognition even among Christ-followers. The reactions of Zechariah and Mary to the messages brought to them are very different. Zechariah is told this is an answer to prayer, yet he replies in doubt when he says, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." Mary is also unsettled by the greeting from an angel but her question is different. She asks for more information, "How will this be since I am a virgin?"

Have you ever been in a situation where you have said the wrong thing, and you knew it was wrong a half-second after you said it? Taking it back is hard. Even so, we are often unwilling to allow God to unfold our dilemma or circumstances; like Zechariah we doubt, then dismiss, and may ultimately miss out on the blessing God has for us. Fortunately, Zechariah's heart responds to the correction of the Lord. When you have a moment, read about the birth of John, Zechariah's confession, and Zechariah's Song. It is an amazing read! (Luke 1:57-79 and compare to Luke 1:11-17 for content.)

God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, *at just the right time*, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:5b-6; *Italics for emphasis*.)

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:1-2)



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