

Luke 1:57–80

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[0 : 0 0] Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child.

And they would have called him Zachariah after his father, but his mother answered, No, he shall be called John. And they said to her, None of your relatives is called by this name.

And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, His name is John. And they all wondered.

And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, Blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea.

And all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What then will this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.

[1 : 1 4] As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us, to show the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant.

The oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

You may be seated. Good morning to you. Happy New Year. It's good to be in God's house again.

[2 : 3 0] What a marvelous backdrop to preach from on this morning. Let me pray. We'll get started in God's word. Father, we give thanks to you this morning. Thank you for the gathering of your people and your gathering with us.

We pray that in all things you would be glorified in Christ's name. Amen. I love this setting. I love hearing the babies coo and love watching Wendy making her eyes at grace and grace making her eyes at her mother up here.

Several weeks ago from Luke chapter 1 verses 39 to 56. We heard the voices of two pregnant women.

They were celebrating. They were celebrating. They were celebrating what the Lord was doing in them and celebrating what the Lord was doing among them.

Luke chapter 1 verse 40 says that they had entered into the house of Zechariah. Mary had entered there. And praising God.

[3 : 39] And, you know, we heard from both her and Elizabeth a few weeks ago. Yet in the narrative a few weeks ago, we did not see Zechariah.

He was a no show, if you will. Even if he had made an appearance, we would not have heard him because the aged priest had been given a sentence of silence.

Nine months of silence. Some of us may wish others of us were on mute for about nine months. Another way of looking at this is that Zechariah was given a divine time out.

He had been benched. He had been benched because of his unbelief. But all of that changes in the text today.

Not only does the aged priest make an appearance. He takes the mic. And he sings. And how he sings.

[4 : 43] Before we listen to his song. And I trust before the service is over. Join him in his song. There are several other things that we need to see.

Given the structure of the text this morning. It really outlines in a rather simple fashion. A son comes into view in verses 57 to 66.

A song is the focus of verses 67 to 79. And a summary wraps us up in verse 80.

A son. A song. And a summary. Let's notice first of all. The son. You see that there?

In verses 57 to 66. Luke helps us to see. Luke helps us to see. That the birth of this child. Was a really big deal. Huh? A big deal where the community.

[5 : 42] Came in. They observed what was going on. And in that context. Zacharias speaks forth a prophetic word. That in fact was for the community then.

And even for us today. The time had come for Elizabeth to give birth. And just as it had been foretold by the angel Gabriel. In Luke chapter 1 verses 12 through 17.

She gave birth to a son. And also as was foretold. The time was a time of rejoicing. Well isn't it wonderful when children come into the world.

And we're right on the threshold of welcoming two more children into our congregation. Elizabeth's family and her neighbors really shared the joy of this occasion.

Why the joy? Huh? Look at verses 57 and 58. Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth. And she gave. She bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her.

[6 : 46] And they rejoiced with her. Why the joy? Because of the magnification of God's mercy. God had shown great, great mercy to her.

And friends anytime that mercy is manifested. Rejoicing is in order. Huh? That was the case then. And that's what it should be.

Anytime the kindness of the Lord is displayed. His kindness has a way of reversing things that have caused pain. Reversing things that have caused sorrow.

Such things must not be taken for granted. We should praise God for them. John's conception and development and birth were displays of the benevolence of God.

God's light had invaded the darkness of this family situation. The Lord was at work here. And guess what? There was great joy. Because there was great mercy.

[7 : 48] I remember last summer when we were here in this very space. Our church experienced the mercies of God. Julia Dennis was a very, very sick young lady.

Prayers were offered. And God magnified his mercy. And raised her up. And yes, we rejoiced in that. Huh? Expressions of joy are appropriate for God's expressions of mercy.

Have you seen God's mercy in your life? Has his mercy been magnified in your life in various ways? Look back over your shoulder. Look in the rear view mirror of our 2013.

Huh? Mercies, I'm sure, in various ways. Showed up for you. Personally, you as a family. Us as a church. Huh? Huh? Was our joy consistent with God's mercy that he has shown?

Huh? But if you look at the text, you would see that joy was not the only emotion that was displayed at the birth of this child. In verse 58, joy gave way to a bit of confusion and consternation.

[9 : 02] Look at the text. Huh? And the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zachariah after his father.

But his mother answered, no. His name should be called John. And they said to her, none of your relatives is called by this name. They made signs to his father inquiring what he wanted the child to be called.

Huh? Huh? A little confusion there. Huh? Some present there with the expectations that the child would bear the name of his father, which would have been an appropriate name. The name itself means the Lord remembered.

And certainly the Lord had done that in this particular situation. Huh? And the naming of the child after his father would have been in order. In the eyes of some, it was a done deal, a foregone conclusion.

He would be called Zachariah. Huh? Now, as well-meaning as that may have been, they did not have the big picture plan.

[10 : 07] Now, the child was indeed the son of Zachariah. But more significantly, the birth of this child had been ordained by God for a very, very special purpose.

And according to Luke chapter 1, verse 15, he would be great before the Lord. He would be filled with the spirit of the Lord, even from his mother's womb.

And he would be used of the Lord to prepare people for the Lord. And thus, in verse 60, his mother spoke and countered public opinion.

In her mind, it was just one name that he would be called. Huh? His God-given name. He will be called John. In other words, the Lord is gracious.

That's what it means. The reversal of Elizabeth's barrenness reflected the graciousness of God, who was about to reverse the course of the nation and ultimately the world.

[11 : 07] God was up to something big with the birth of this child. In the minds of some, however, the matter still was not settled. We need to see what Papa has to say about this.

So they sought the silent Zechariah on this matter. God, given his inability to speak, they handed him a tablet, probably a wood tablet with wax on it.

It was the iPad, if you will, of that day. And he wrote on it. Zechariah, here he is, long past doubt. He's a full-fledged believer at this point.

His name is John, he says. Don't you love what you see in verse 64? Think about it in slow motion. Immediately, his mouth opens.

And his tongue was loose and he spoke, blessing God. Out of his mouth comes the praises of God. Immediately his mouth was opened.

[12 : 08] A power outside of himself. His tongue was loose. He blessed God. And we see the content of his praise, of his blessing in 67 to 79. But Luke here, he wants us to see the community response.

He wants us to see the response of others to what's going on. Just how does the community respond to this great thing that's going on in their midst?

Look at verses 65 and 66. Notice the repetition of the word all in those verses. Fear came on all their neighbors.

And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea. And all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What then will this child be?

For the hand of the Lord was with him. Huh? These things, friends, were the talk of the region. The folks were all struck. Captivated.

[13 : 12] They couldn't stop talking about these things. Of the news that was trending in Judea in those days. What they would have likely heard, would have seen, would be headlines like this.

Agent women gives birth. Silent priest gets his voice back. Click on that one and see the full story. Huh? The region was abuzz with noise.

Huh? The news of the goings on in the house of Zachariah and Elizabeth's family needed processing. And conversation. And discernment.

And heart space. For pondering what was going on reflection. Huh? Just think, if you had gotten an invitation to the circumcision party of that day.

Huh? Welcome. John, the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth, being circumcised. Come and join. What would you have expected on that? You probably would have gotten more than you would have expected had you been there.

[14 : 16] Luke shows us that the birth of John was a big deal. And the community recognized this. Huh? Did you notice the question in verse 66?

Look at it with me. What then will this child be? That answer comes in the next section. Huh? And we see it. We see the answer there.

In verses 57 through 66, a son is born. In the events surrounding his birth and his circumcision, they come into focus. The text now shifts from a son to a song.

Huh? While Luke has shown us that the birth of the son was a big deal, he also shows us that Zachariah's son had a role in a very big plan.

A plan that was celebrated by him in song. Huh? You see the way it begins in verse 67? His father Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.

[15 : 21] Huh? And what a marvelous song, friends, this is before us. Finally, we get to hear a man's voice. Huh? And he leads us here in worship.

He leads us here today in worship. Here was a faith-filled man. And guess what, friends? Faith-filled people qualify to lead us in worship.

That's what he did. I mean, he was silent before this. But over the months and having heard and seeing what God was doing, huh? This man's faith was kindled and rekindled.

And guess what he's doing now? He's leading the people of God. He's leading the people there in worship. Huh? Huh? Doubt had given way to exuberant prophetic praise.

The freedom expressed in song reflects that of a heart that is no longer shackled by unbelief. Huh? Let me ask you about your singing today. Was it really a reflection of your heart's belief?

[16 : 27] Huh? When faith, friends, grips our hearts, one singing will express that kind of belief. Huh? And you can tell it. Here he is, faith-filled man, huh?

Leading worship before them. Zachariah makes the third member of his family that's filled with the Spirit. Huh? Huh? John, Luke 1, 15, he's filled from his mother's womb.

Huh? Elizabeth, Luke 1, 41, she's filled with the Spirit and gets to sing praises. And finally, as if he is a Zachariah come lately, he too is filled with the Spirit and expresses it in wonderful praise.

Huh? His words are spirit-prompted. And out of the overflow of his heart, he sings about the glorious deeds of the Lord, the deeds of the Almighty. And if you would notice the text here, his singing is after the manner of the Old Testament psalmist, both in content, what he says, as well as in style, how he says it.

Salvation, friends, and you will see this here. Salvation is the theme of his song. Look at it with me. Look at, you see it there in verse 69. Huh? Salvation.

[17 : 49] Look at verse 71, that we should be saved. Huh? Salvation. We see that there. And we see a synonym, verse 74, being delivered.

And then finally, we see it's salvation, the word again, in verse 77. Salvation is the theme of his song. Huh? He's singing was, again, after the manner of the Old Testament psalmist.

And two things come into view in the song. First thing that comes into view is the visitation of a Savior. He sings about that. Huh? And the second thing, not only is there the visitation of the Savior, there's the participation of a son.

First of all, the divine visitation. You see that there in verse 68? Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and he has raised that big horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.

Huh? Zachariah's song celebrated the anticipated visit, the visit of God. And guess what he was doing? He was making good on his promise of salvation.

[19 : 00] He had made some grand promises in the past, and we could see them on the pages of the Old Testament Scripture. And the time had come for him to fulfill the promises that he had uttered through the mouths of his prophets.

Huh? The song is about salvation. Look in verse 68. We notice the source of salvation. That's God himself, the Lord God of Israel. And it is through the one who would come through King David's family.

You see that there? In the house of his servant David. Huh? Prophets had spoken of the Lord's salvation initiative for centuries. Look at that in verse 70. As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.

The source of salvation? God himself. The means or the instrument of salvation? One from the Davidic family.

Huh? What about the nature of salvation? We see that in verse 71. It's salvation from enemies. Huh?

[20 : 06] Salvation from the hands of haters. Huh? Verse 74 similarly speaks of being delivered from the hand of enemies.

Now, did this mean that God was about the business then and there to deliver Israel from her political and military enemies, the enemies of the nation?

Would he deal with them during this particular plan visit? That, friends, would not be the case. What's in view here is rescue from the spiritual powers of darkness, of sin and Satan.

Sinister forces that are enemies of all mankind. Guess what? They're your enemies. And my enemies today. Huh? The song highlights the defeat of the enemies of God's people.

Huh? And as we understand, friends, the ultimate fulfillment of this, we can grasp better the nature of the enemies being referred to. Our Lord came to save us from Satan's power, as the song said, when we had gone astray.

- [21 : 13] Huh? Notice the words promised in covenant in verses 72 and 73 and 0. God was going to deliver on what he had promised to the forefathers of the Jewish race.
- His covenant would be remembered and his mercies would be broadly extended on his visitation. Oh, don't you want someone to come bringing grand and glorious things that this song speaks about?
- Just think about the anticipation that there should be in view of that kind of visitation. Huh? The source of salvation. The nature of salvation.
- Huh? But then in verses 74 and 75, we see the purpose of salvation. Look there with me. That we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear.
- How? In holiness before him all our days. Huh? While on the one hand, salvation is liberation from the forces that harm us.
- [22 : 17] But it's also submission to the one who has freed us. Huh? Oh, think about Mark chapter 5. You remember that man who was in such a bad way?
- I mean, he couldn't stay around normal people in normal places. He was relegated to the cemetery. Huh? Oh, but Jesus delivered him, broke the chains that had bound him from years.
- And then we see him there sitting at Jesus' feet. He wanted to be with Jesus. So salvation is not only deliverance, not only liberation. It is also submission.
- And what we see here, huh? Thus we should serve him. How? Boldly, without fear. Willingly, courageously. How? As those who are set apart for himself.
- Huh? For him, for his righteous purposes in holiness and righteousness. And for how long? As long as we live. This is a life long kind of deal.
- [23 : 22] Huh? Huh? Zachariah's song features the visitation of a Savior to fulfill the promises of God. But another person enters into the picture.
- And thus the song is also about the participation of a son who would serve God's purposes. Huh? Notice in verse 76. Zachariah's prophetic praise shifts from the Savior to his own son.
- Don't you love what you see there? And you, child. And you, child. I remember my grandmother. She had quite a few grandkids. And sometimes she would get a little confused. And she'd start Fred, Arthur, you, child.
- Just to identify. Huh? Huh? Huh? But I want you to think with me. Here we are in this situation. Zachariah is giving praise.
- And think about it. Maybe he goes down and he gets his son in his arm. Huh? And cradles him and looks in his eye. And you, child.
- [24 : 29] Or maybe he hoists him in the air. Look in that little one. And you, child. Huh? Huh? And he speaks to him.
- The words. You, child. In view of all of this is what God is going to do. You, son. You have a role in it.
- Huh? You have a special role in what God is doing. Huh? Huh? The words that were right for his son.
- Huh? Think about this. It was John's party. But Jesus got the main line, huh? On there. He was the headliner for it.
- But John, his role would be prophet of the most time. What an honor. He would go before the Lord to prepare his ways.
- [25 : 25] Even as those in ancient days made raided roles where a king would travel. John's ministry and preaching, like the improvement of the ancient roles.

Like filling the potholes that we'll have in about three months. Huh? Would prepare people to receive the ministry of Jesus. That's what he would do. You, child.

Huh? In God's grand initiative, you, child. You have a role in that. His preaching would pave the way for Jesus. He's preaching. Repent.

For the kingdom of God is at hand. His baptism for repentance and the forgiveness of sins would prepare the people of Israel for the one who would baptize ultimately with the Holy Spirit.

His ministry would prepare the moral and the spiritual landscape for the ministry of Jesus. You, child. Huh? Huh? And at this occasion that celebrated the birth and the circumcision of John, the prominent word was in fact about the one who would fulfill God's promise to save.

[26 : 28] But there was also a word regarding one who would serve God's purposes. John's role was unique. A one-and-a-kind role. In heaven's strategic plan, he called for a front man, a lead man.

And John filled that role. And his birth pointed to the fact, hey, it's a new day. God's doing something new. And guess what?

The people, they felt that. They were in touch with those things. Huh? When we get to verses 78 and 79, the imagery shifts. Look at it with me. Because the mercy is still there, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death to guide our feet in the way of peace.

Huh? The metaphor shifts from liberation and might that we've seen in the verses that precede to illumination and light that we see in these verses.

Light. Light that's radiating God's tender mercies would be illumination for those who were engulfed in darkness at the time of this visitation.

[27 : 44] Huh? Huh? It would provide guidance for those who needed to be on Peace Boulevard, finding the way of peace. Huh? I wonder if there's anybody who lives on Peace Boulevard.

Huh? That might not be a physical address, but it should be a spiritual address. Those who are in Christ on Peace Boulevard.

Huh? If you don't know that street, you can't know it. Huh? You may know confusion corridor or confusion court.

You live there, dwell there. You don't have to. All of that can change through the one who came on the basis of this visitation. The birth of Zachariah's son was a big deal.

The song of Zachariah revealed a big plan that included a role for Zachariah's son. But finally, look at verse 80. We see the summary.

[28 : 46] Luke is known for his summary statements. We see them quite prominently in the book of Acts in its various sections, but he also has several here in the book of Luke.

He gives what's also known as a progress report. Huh? Verse 57.

Verse 57. The child is born. Verse 76. The child is celebrated. And here we see the child grew and became strong in spirit.

Physical growth is assumed, but it's more than that. For God's purposes for this child to be fulfilled, there would need to be moral growth and spiritual growth.

He would need internal kind of fortitude. He would need to be strong in spirit. And because the hand of the Lord was with him, 66B, that in fact, friends, would be the case.

[29 : 49] Ready him for his mission, his God-ordained mission. Celebration of a Savior at Zachariah's house.

We move from the celebration then to the celebration today in our family. Zachariah was looking forward at these things, though right on the threshold of them.

You and I can be able to look back and see the one who fit the very profile that Zachariah prophesied about that he spoke of.

None other than the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. He indeed was the one of whom the prophets spoke. Moses. And David.

And Isaiah. And Jeremiah. And others. Jesus put it this way. If you look, you'll find this in Luke chapter 24, verse 25. This was after his resurrection.

[30 : 57] And he was interacting with those who were on the Mayas Road. They were still confused. And listen to what he had to say. He said to them, Friends, the coming of Jesus into this world was the visitation of God.

When Jesus came, God came. Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son. They shall call his name Emmanuel, which translated means God with us.

Jesus, the one who has rescued us from the greatest of all enemies. He, through the gospel, has turned us from darkness to light.

From the power of Satan to God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in him. Jesus.

Jesus. Zachariah sang in anticipation. We can sing in reflection of what God has done in and through his visitation, in and through the person and the work of his son.

[32 : 25] If this savior, if the one who has visited in fulfillment of the very promises of God, if he in fact is your savior, I'm inviting you to this table today.

Here we are reminded of the one who gives deliverance and light and peace. Huh? He is the one who has delivered us from the greatest of all enemies of sin and Satan and death.

And as such is the case for you. This table is for you. And so that today, huh? On a chilly, going to be frigid, January 2014, huh?

We are, on the one hand, led in praise and to praise from this priest who was able to get back in the game.

Huh? We're led by him. And we, too, in view of the visitation of God in the person and work of his son, we can say with him.

[33 : 39] Huh? We can echo his praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant, Jesus.

David. Jesus is the person. And the table before us today represents his work on our behalf. He came from heaven to earth to show the way.

From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay. From the cross to the grave. From the grave to the sky. And we can, with Zachariah on this morning, lift his name on high.

The bread represents the body, the blood, his covenant. And listen this morning as I lead you into words of institution.

On the night he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread. And when he had given thanks to you, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, Take eat.

[34 : 56] This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And the same way after supper, he took the cup. And when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, Drink this all of you.

This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.

And so we celebrate this covenant with joy. And await the glorious appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who will unite all things.

In heaven and on earth. Raising us from death. Making all things new. By him and with him and in him. In the unity of the Holy Spirit. All honor and glory is yours, almighty Father.

Father. Now and forever. Let me pray. And then I'm going to invite those who in fact have embraced God's coming and the person and the work of his son.

[35 : 55] I'm going to invite you to come to the table. Let me pray. Father, we love you. And we thank you for this song. About a Savior.

You're coming. To visit. In and through the person and work of Jesus. Not just a casual visit.

A visit with a purpose. For the Son of Man has come. To seek and to save. That which was lost. And we thank you, Lord, that as we have embraced you.

We have received from you. Oh, Lord, we have received liberation. We have received illumination. And we bless and we honor you this day.

Amen.