

# Zechariah's Song

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[ 0 : 00 ] The scripture reading is taken from Luke chapter 1 verses 57 through 79. 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.

[ 1 : 06 ] 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.

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.

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 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.

[ 2 : 53 ] Thank you very much, Rose. Well, this morning we are continuing our sermon series. It's a three-part series, and it's titled The Songs of Christmas.

And last Sunday we looked at Mary's song, and this morning we are considering Zechariah's song. And next Sunday we will conclude on Christmas Day, looking at the angel song.

And once again, the primary aim of this sermon series, as Brother Troy highlighted in The Call to Worship, is to really help us to turn our hearts towards the real purpose and reason for Christmas, which is the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we are not distracted and misguided during this time, as so many are.

And I think it seems like every passing year, Christ, for many, is pushed to the edges of this wonderful time of celebrating the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And certainly, if there's one group of people this should not be true for, it is for those who name the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There should be a time when our eyes are being laser-focused on Christ and his birth.

[ 4 : 21 ] Well, let me pray for us as we open God's word. Father, we're so grateful that you have brought us together this morning. Thank you, Lord, for the ways you have already been speaking to our hearts through the songs that we have sung, through the prayer that's been prayed and through your scripture that's been read.

And Lord, would you speak to us now through the preaching of your word. We ask that you would show us Christ. And we ask, Lord, because unless you reveal Christ, we do not see him.

We cannot see him. And so would you open the eyes of our hearts that we might behold Christ in the preaching of your word.

We pray this morning that even though this text is about John the Baptist and his birth and naming, would you show us Christ.

And Lord, may you be pleased not only to show us Christ in terms of information, but Lord, in terms of transformation, may we be transformed as a result of beholding the living Christ in the preaching of your word.

[ 5 : 44 ] We pray and ask that you will do this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if you were here last week, you'd probably recall that at the very outset of the sermon, I directed you to the reason that Luke wrote his gospel.

Luke, and indeed all of the gospel writers, is they lay out very clearly why they are writing their gospel. And Luke tells us in verse 4 of chapter 1 why he was writing his gospel to this man by the name of Theophilus, and indeed by extension to all of God's people.

And what he says is this. He says, I'm writing to you, Theophilus, that you might have certainty about the things you've been taught. Luke didn't want Theophilus to merely accept information that came to him, but he wanted Theophilus to be certain that the things that he had been taught about the person and the work of Jesus Christ were indeed true.

And that's because Luke is writing a gospel that is going to end with Christ on the cross. And Luke wants Theophilus, he wants us to know who this person is.

who's going to die this unique death on the cross. And he starts that by showing us that he had a unique birth. He was different.

[ 7 : 13 ] He wasn't conceived the way the rest of us were conceived. He was conceived as the Savior of the world. And so Luke is concerned that Theophilus would have certainty.

He wants us to have certainty as well. So, last week, we considered Mary's response to all that had happened to her.

What we saw was she broke out into singing and she sang what we call the Magnificat. And this morning, we are now looking at Zechariah Zechariah.

And Luke's account of the birth of John and the naming of John. And we see that Zechariah, like Mary, sung a song of blessing and praise to God.

And one of the things I want to say to us this morning as we consider this is Luke is not just restating some historical facts for us. He is giving us some facts, but Luke has a point behind restating these historical facts.

[ 8 : 28 ] And remember that even though he is talking about John, he is ultimately talking about the Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ. And so first, what we should see in Luke's recounting of these details concerning John the Baptist is that God fulfilled his word.

Elizabeth, who was formerly barren, could not give birth to a son, to children. And we see that God fulfilled the promise that he gave to Zechariah that he and Elizabeth were going to have a child.

And Luke's point is that this didn't happen in the corner somewhere where one day Elizabeth just showed up with this child. No, Luke tells us, he said, this was noised abroad, far and wide, and neighbors and relatives were present on the eighth day when he was to be named.

And contrary to the tradition of the time, they wanted him to be named, well, consistent with the tradition of the time, they wanted him to be named after Zechariah.

And his mother said, no, he's going to be named John. And they also called or signified to Zechariah and he confirmed his name will be John in obedience to what Gabriel had foretold.

[ 10 : 03 ] And again, Luke's point to Theophilus would really be Theophilus, I'm not making this up. I'm not revising history. This is true. This son who was promised to this elderly couple, God fulfilled that promise.

It was talked about throughout all the hill country of Judea. When you think about the life of John the Baptist, if there was ever a person who was born for a singular reason, to serve another person, a person is John the Baptist.

John came into this world for one single purpose and that is to be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would be the one who would go before the Lord Jesus and would point to him as God's Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

And that's what we see in this account before us. Even though Luke is taking up much time talking about John himself, he's doing so because John is functioning in Scripture to point to the Lord

Jesus Christ.

It all points to him and this is what we see in Zechariah's song. Zechariah's song underscores this purpose that is being worked out in history and in the birth of John.

[ 11 : 37 ] And so this morning in our remaining time, I want us to consider this song of Zechariah and if you notice, it's really two sentences long. It starts in verse 68, it ends in verse 79, and it's two sentences long.

And so naturally it lends itself to be divided into two points and the two points are this morning briefly, number one, God's plan in redemption history.

We see that in verses 68 to 75. And then second, Zechariah sings about John's place in redemption history. And we see that in verses 76 to 79.

So let's consider the first point, God's plan in redemption history. Notice in verse 67 that we're told that Zechariah was actually prophesying.

So this song of Zechariah is actually a prophecy. Luke tells us that Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied.

[ 12 : 49 ] And it can rightly be called a prophecy that bridges the Old Testament and the New Testament. It's a bridge prophecy. It's the last word of prophecy in the Old Testament and it's really the first word of prophecy in the New Testament.

It's bridging the two of these covenants together. And so in a sense what we see Zechariah doing is he's looking back on the promises of God and then he's also looking forward to the fulfillment of those promises in the New Testament.

The prophecy of Zechariah is a song of praise to God and it's called the Benedictus. If you are from a Roman Catholic or Anglican background you probably heard that before.

the Benedictus and it comes from the Latin translation the first word in the first line of Zechariah's song is the word blessed.

And this Benedictus as I indicated corresponds to Mary's magnificent. When we consider the Benedictus it is really instructive for us.

[ 14 : 03 ] It really speaks a lesson to us that we should all pay attention to and take to heart. It's very clear from the context of this account that Zechariah was not only dumb but he was also deaf.

Not only was his speech taken away from him for nine months but he was also deaf and we know this because we're told that the people had to signify to him.

They had to make signs to him to communicate with him. If he had only lost his speech and he could still hear they could speak to him and he could communicate with them but he wasn't able to do either one of those.

And so from the context we're able to see that Zechariah was not able to speak, he wasn't able to hear and so he wrote on this tablet what John's name was going to be.

And as you can imagine, I mean, I don't know, I have this experience, I don't know if the rest of you have it, but I have this experience where sometimes in the mornings, I have had an ongoing issue with like a buildup of wax in my ears and so in the mornings, some mornings I can get up, my alarm would be on and I don't hear it.

[ 15 : 24 ] And Lexi would have to nudge me and tell me to go and do the alarm. And it always gives me this sense of what it must be like to not be able to hear. Zachariah wasn't able to hear nor able to speak for nine months.

And you can imagine how that shut him out from a lot of the social interaction and social intercourse that people would normally have. And I'd like to think that because Zachariah was a priest, Zachariah was using this time in great reflection, this angel that appeared to him, Mary was living in their house for three months.

And I believe that he would have been pouring over the scriptures. I believe he had been spending time in the scriptures. And the scriptures for him would have been from Genesis to Malachi.

Zachariah.

And on this day when his son is being named, Zachariah no doubt is overjoyed by the fact that this child that he and his wife had prayed for all their lives, that God had given him this child in his late years.

But what we see is on this day that's supposed to be filled with personal excitement for a father. Zachariah's heart, the excitement in his heart is overshadowed by the magnitude of God's divine plan in redemption.

[ 17 : 03 ] And I think this is a striking aspect of the Benedictus. That despite being overjoyed about having a son in his old age, after decades of praying, Zachariah's words will be Godward.

Zachariah's words would be heavenward. And no doubt he's able to see that God's plan in redemption in ways that he probably did not see before.

And again, magnified by Mary's presence in their house and all that had been happening. And to know that another prophecy that God had uttered, that there would be this one coming before the Messiah, that he and his wife have the privilege to bear this child.

And so what we see is from the very outset of Zachariah's song in verses 68 and 69, instead of having John in view, Zachariah has Christ in view.

Notice in verse 68 that he uses this word visited to talk about what God had done. That God had visited his people and it is a word from the Old Testament language to communicate how God comes to his people in a real way.

[ 18 : 27 ] And in this case, he came with mercy and with grace. And in his song, Zachariah prophesies that it is an accomplished fact. Not that he will visit his people, but that he has visited his people.

He has visited his people. Again, notice how he says it in verse 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people.

Past tense. And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. Past tense. God had done that.

Because the Messiah was in Mary's womb, about three months old. And John the Baptist, the one who was going to say, prepare the way of the Lord, has been born. And he now is going to be fulfilling his ministry.

God had visited his people. God had broken into human history. And he had broken into human history. in verse 69, where he talks about this horn of salvation.

[ 19 : 39 ] Again, this is Old Testament redemptive language. You use these around any of the faithful people of God. They knew you were talking about the activity of God.

That God had raised up a horn of salvation to refer to a mighty deliverance that only he could bring about for those who needed deliverance but couldn't deliver themselves.

And again, without a doubt, he's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was born from the lineage of David.

He's not talking about John. He's going to talk about John. But he's not talking about John yet. He's talking about the Lord who is the horn of salvation.

The one who is going to rescue his people with power and might. And he says, God, bless you that you have visited your people, that you are actually doing this.

[ 20 : 43 ] And notice what he says in verse 70. He's helping us to see that God is performing his word. He says that God had spoken these promises by the mouth of his holy prophets of old.

And again, why is he doing this? He's doing this to save the Theophilus. Theophilus. God keeps his promises. God keeps his word. These promises uttered thousands of years ago.

God is keeping them even now. He is fulfilling the promise that he would raise up a Savior. And that promise is being fulfilled in the person of the Lord in Mary's womb.

God is in verse 71 that Zechariah sings about why God has visited his people and raised up a horn of salvation. Here's the reason.

To save them from their enemies and from the hand of all who hate them. He is singing about a divine rescue. Now, many of the Jews who would have heard Zechariah prophesy just because of the way the Jews interacted with the Gentiles and with the Romans in particular, they would have thought that what Zechariah was singing about was that finally God was going to deliver them from all of the oppression of the Romans and other hostile enemies around them.

[ 22 : 19 ] But as the redemption story unfolds, what we see is that that was not the primary concern of God. As a matter of fact, we see it when Jesus is walking the earth.

Jesus is not taking issue fighting the Romans. He's living under Roman rule. He was born under their rule. He lived under their rule. And they were not the focus of his attention.

And so in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan, we see that it was not human enemies that he had in view. Instead, when God visited his people, he did so with their ultimate enemies in view, the enemies of sin and Satan.

And those are the enemies that Jesus defeated in his life and in his death and in his resurrection. Sin and Satan, brothers and sisters and friends, are our real enemies.

God is more concerned to help us and to deliver us in those areas than any other temporal circumstance that we may find ourselves in. Even though those situations may buffet us and bring pressure to us, God is ultimately concerned about us in a spiritual sense and in our soul and our eternal state and where we stand relative to sin and to Satan.

[ 23 : 52 ] What was true for the nation of Israel is true for us this morning. God is more concerned about your and my holiness than he is concerned about our happiness and that everything around us is going well.

and I believe that the same way that the Harrahs around Zechariah could have misconstrued what he was singing about, what was important, and who those enemies were that God was breaking into history to deliver them from, again, we can make the same mistake in thinking that God's focus is where it really is not.

notice in verses 72 to 73 that Zechariah is saying that God not only visited his people to fulfill his word by the prophets concerning David's house, but he did so to show the mercy that he promised to the fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to Abraham.

I often like to make a big deal when I see the scriptures reminding us of the mercy of God back in the Old Testament, of the undeserved kindness of God back in the Old Testament, because there is this pervasive view on the part of a lot of people that in the Old Testament you get no mercy from God, it's only the New Testament that you get mercy, but God was actually in the New Covenant performing this merciful act of bringing redemption through Jesus that John was going to point to in fulfillment of mercy that he promised way, way back in the Old Covenant.

moment. And I think some of us would remember as we have been working through the book of Genesis, that this mercy that God is now bringing is the mercy that he promised to Adam and Eve when they sinned, that he was going to send a Savior, he was going to send one who was going to crush the head of the serpent, the one who was going to deal with what their foundational problem and issue was.

[ 26 : 33 ] And what he did in that was he is showing mercy. And you know what the implication of that is? The implication of showing mercy is that mercy is being substituted for what was really deserved from the outside, which was judgment.

You don't get mercy in a vacuum, you get mercy because mercy is a substitute for judgment. Mercy comes instead of wrath and judgment that is deserved, and mercy comes as something that is undeserved because God is merciful and good and kind.

And he was demonstrating that. And that's what Zechariah is singing about. Zechariah is saying that God has broken into human history because he has now come to perform that mercy that he promised from a long time ago.

And John's birth was proof that God was doing this. John was the one who was going to go before the one through whom mercy would come. And Zechariah says God has done it and he is singing about God's great mercy.

mercy. Notice in verses 74 to 75 we see the ultimate reason for God's salvation.

[ 28 : 07 ] It is so that his people being delivered from the hand of their enemies might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all their days.

friends God doesn't save us just to live our best lives. God doesn't save us so that we could just have this blissful wonderful life living on this earth that he has provided.

No he has saved us so that we might serve him in fear and holiness and righteousness all of our days. What God did for the children of Israel when he brought them out of Egypt and he said now you're going to be a nation of priests to me to serve me.

That's what God is doing in the new covenant as he brings people out of the world which is a kind of Egypt and he says now you're to live for me and you're to serve me in holiness all of your days.

All of your days. Not when you're old and you're ready to retire but all of your days especially in our best days when we are young and when we are stronger and when we have health.

[ 29 : 21 ] This is the reason that God has visited his people. He has visited them so that they might serve him in fear without fear in holiness and righteousness all of their days.

This was not possible under the old covenant. this is only possible because of the work of Jesus Christ which Zechariah is contemplating in these words.

It is possible through the saving work that Christ performed on the cross so that sinners may be forgiven and so that sinners may be reconciled to God and they may live lives of holiness and righteousness all their days.

Zechariah's song reminds us that despite how things may look despite how long things may take God keeps his promises.

promises. He keeps his promises. And he's not jittery or anxious about that. He keeps his promises. A lot of time had elapsed and no doubt people were wondering is he going to perform his word?

[ 30 : 46 ] Will he perform his word? No. He keeps his promises. Zechariah sings about this promise-keeping God who is fulfilling this age-long promise of sending the Messiah.

And this should speak to us this morning. This should remind us that God keeps his promises. Those of us who have trusted in Christ this morning we should take this to heart.

God keeps his promises. He kept his promise to send his son the first time. Son of his Savior. He will keep his promise to send his son the second time. and he will come as judge. He will fulfill his word.

I think we should also consider this in a personal sense as well. In a personal way. In a personal context as well. We should be reminded that God will keep those promises that he has made to us personally.

[ 31 : 59 ] Because he keeps his word. When we think of Isaac for example when God gave Sarah and Abraham Isaac as a child.

God was doing two things. He was performing a promise that he had given to them that they were going to have a child but he was also fulfilling his larger redemptive plan and purpose.

And then we see the same thing in John. That when God was giving Elizabeth and Zechariah a son it was fulfilling this desire they had all their lives to have a child.

But also in the midst of that God was working out his redemptive plan and purpose. promise. And I know that we aren't able to take the promises that we sense in our hearts from the Lord in the exact same way because the truth is sometimes the things we hold in our hearts as promises from the Lord maybe we have allowed a desire more so to overshadow what we may consider to be a promise from God when it really may not be so.

But God does give his people promises. God does put personal promises in our hearts. I know that some of us have carried promises in our hearts for years.

[ 33 : 30 ] Promises we sense to be from the Lord that have not yet been fulfilled. And I think we should take heart from this account as we consider it.

The Lord performing these promises that he had made to the fathers long ago. We should take heart that God keeps his promises.

And no matter what it looks like, if that is a promise from God in your heart, God will perform his word. You know, the meaning of John is God is gracious.

God told them, name this child, God is gracious. And I think it spoke to two things. It spoke to God being gracious to them and fulfilling this long desire they had.

But also another reminder to all of us about the character of God, that God is gracious. He is a gracious God.

[ 34 : 35 ] in a very strict sense, the benedictus ends in verse 75. And that's because starting in verse 76, Zechariah turns his attention away from God.

He turns his attention now to his son, his eight days old infant son, and he sings about him. So in a strict sense, the benedictus ends in verse 75.

But broadly, the whole thing is still the song of Zechariah. And so as he turns his attention to his eight days old son, he transitions away from focusing on God's plan in redemption history, and he is now looking at John's place in redemption history, which is my second and final point.

In verses 76 to 79, we have the second verse, or the second stanza of Zechariah's song.

Again, one sentence long. And we see Zechariah echoing the words of Gabriel, that John was going to be great, that John was going to be the one who was going to prepare the way for the Messiah.

[ 36 : 01 ] He would go before him, and he outlines John's ministry. And he says that John would be a prophet of God, one who represents God and speaks for God. And he says as well that John would be this forerunner.

He will go before the Lord in the same way that in those days when an important dignitary was coming to town, he would have a forerunner who would go before him and who would announce that he is coming and tell the people get prepared, get ready.

They would prepare the road and they would make sure everything is right. And for those of you who wonder why it is when the queen or a member of the monarchy is visiting the Bahamas, they pave all the roads and paint all the walls, that's where this comes from.

It's a part of that tradition when someone important is coming, somebody comes ahead and they make sure that that route they're going to take, that whole road is paved. I remember my first experience with that, and some of you who are in my age may remember this, remember when Queen Elizabeth visited and she was going to see Elizabeth Estates, this would be one, I don't know, when was this, BJ, you would know what year that was.

84, 86, yeah, anything political you could ask my brother, he knows. And they paved the road from the airport straight to Elizabeth Estates.

[ 37 : 42 ] No potholes, no bumps, that road was paved because Queen Elizabeth was going to be on that road. And they do send their emissaries before them to tell people, get ready, get prepared, and they make sure everything is prepared.

And that's what John the Baptist, that was his task. That was this one who was six months older than his cousin. He was coming humbly to just point to him and to prepare the way for him.

This is John's place in redemption history. John's mind. You know, I wonder if it just runs through John's mind.

Why am I the one to prepare for him? Why? I couldn't be the Messiah and he is the one who's preparing for me. But we don't get a hint of that from John. Not a hint of it.

In all of his ministry, we see John being that forerunner. We see John being that faithful pointer to the Messiah. He says, I'm not worthy to lose his shoelaces.

[ 38 : 57 ] He says, I must decrease so that he might increase. That was his ministry. He came to prepare and to point.

He came to say to the people, get ready. The king is coming. The Messiah is coming. You need to repent. You need to change. His ministry was to prick the hearts of the people.

And when we read the account later on in Luke's gospel, as John preached, people came and they said to him, what must we do? And he told them certain things that they needed to do.

But those things did not bring them salvation. The most John could do was to help them to see their need to do something, their need to change.

And they came to John and John told them, these are the things you needed to do. But John pointed to Jesus as the one who takes away the sins of the world.

[ 40 : 03 ] They needed the salvation that Christ himself was offering. He needed to do something. Notice in verse 78 that Zechariah uses a particular word, a very insightful word to refer to Jesus.

He uses the word the sunrise. Or the word is sunrise, but he says the sunrise. He talks about the sunrise who shall visit us from on high.

John's ministry was to prepare for this one and to point to this one who was the sunrise who would visit from on high. And Zechariah says he's going to do it because of the tender mercy of God.

It struck me the number of times, three times in this account around John where the mercy of God is referred to. His great mercy and his tender mercy.

And then just his mercy. And again, it speaks to our pitiful state. It speaks to our helpless state. We need mercy. Because we deserve wrath and we deserve judgment and we deserve punishment for our sins.

[ 41 : 17 ] And the only thing that can help us is the mercy of God coming to us in our pitiful and rebellious and helpless state.

God's son comes in God's mercy and he brings the salvation that we all need.

And in verse 79, we see the ultimate purpose for the sunrise from on high coming to this sin cursed world. For three reasons.

one, to give light to those who sit in darkness, to give life to those sitting in the shadow of death, and to give peace to those who are at war with God and with one another.

And friends, this is the condition of every single person who's away from the Lord. This is the condition of those who are lost in this world. They are in darkness, they are in death, and they are at war and strife, and they know no peace within them or around them.

[ 42 : 42 ] And the good news is that Jesus Christ, the sunrise from on high, has come. And see, this is why the message of Christmas is always very relevant.

Christ being born and coming into our world is always relevant because there are always people in darkness, in death, and at war.

I can't remember which song it was we sang this morning, but one of the songs we sang spoke about wars ending, and I began to think about the situation again in Ukraine and all the unrest. first. It was O come, O come, Emmanuel. And it's only when Emmanuel comes, it is only when Emmanuel comes into our lives that we will know this light and this life and this peace.

It's only when he comes. We know it no other way, friends. The world's best substitutes cannot give us true light in darkness and true life in death and true peace in strife.

[ 44 : 01 ] It is only through the sunrise from on high that these are possible. There are those of us this morning who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

you have been translated out of darkness, you've come into light. You've been translated from death to life.

And you now have peace with God. Those are eternal realities that cannot change because God ensures that they will not change. But I think we all know that even though those realities are true for us as we live in this world, we can still experience darkness.

We can still experience the shut-up death that is all around us. And we can still live a life of turmoil that isn't experiencing the peace that Christ has come to bring.

And I think this is another reason for us to hear afresh the gospel in the coming of Jesus Christ that again he can bring to us in our circumstances.

[ 45 : 19 ] He can be the light that breaks into the darkness. He can be the life that breaks in to the shadow of death that's all around us. And he can be the one that gives us peace in the midst of our worst strife and difficulty and trials that we have.

And I think living in a broken world to one degree or another we all wrestle with these realities of darkness and death and a lack of peace.

All of us. It's just a matter to which degree. And I just encourage all of us, those of us who have trusted Christ but still find ourselves wrestling with these conditions.

May we embrace a fresh the gospel and what Christ has brought to us. And may we appropriate that right now that he is still light to us.

He is still life to us. He is still peace to us. Whatever our circumstances may be. And how kind of the Lord to just break into our darkness and break into the death that is around us.

[ 46 : 33 ] I was yesterday or the day before. I think it was yesterday at some point. No, it was on Friday. I was just feeling pressed in my soul.

And just out of nowhere, the Lord just laid in my heart a song of hope. I will trust my Savior Jesus. He breaks into our present realities peace.

When we are being engulfed by darkness and the shadow of death and a lack of peace. And that's available to all of us today. And so I encourage us, let us open our hearts to this as well.

John's place in redemption history is that he came to preach and to call people to repent and to prepare for the one who was coming after him.

And although we didn't read it in verse 80, it tells us that the child, John, grew and became strong in spirit and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

[ 47 : 52 ] it just seems like John exclusively was prepared for this unique ministry of just a few months of introducing the Messiah.

A few short months after pointing to Jesus saying, behold the lamb that takes away the sin of the world, John was beheaded. He was put in prison and he was beheaded.

He didn't start his ministry until Christ was ready to start his and so John exclusively served this particular purpose. And I think one of the things can happen to us though as we consider these accounts of Christ and his coming, we can forget that this is historical now.

John has performed his ministry, Christ has performed his ministry, Christ has lived and died, was buried and resurrected and now in light of this fulfillment, we all have to ask, what have we done with it?

Again, many of us have come to trust Christ. Many of us have come to know what it is to have eternal life.

[ 49 : 29 ] life. But what about those of you this morning who don't yet know that, present or watching online? This salvation and the forgiveness of sins are available right now.

and so the question is, are you in this place of spiritual darkness and death and war, rebelling against God and being at war with those around you?

You have no peace in your soul because you know it is not well with your soul. And that's you this morning. I called you.

to believe the gospel, to turn from your sins and to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. To come to the one who says, come to me, all who labor and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

And all who come to him, they find rest for their souls. One of the best examples of someone in scripture who recognized his wretched condition is the tax collector who stood in the temple and beat his breast and said, God have mercy on me, a sinner.

[ 51 : 06 ] And if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ today, that is my encouragement to you.

Throw yourself on the mercy of God and cry out to him, asking him to have mercy on you, a sinner, and what you will find, that he will do just that.

Because he says all those who come to him, he will never turn away. I pray that we would all draw hope and encouragement this morning from this ministry that comes to us through the sunrise from on high whom John pointed to and rather for the first time or rather having it renewed in our hearts that we are receiving the light and the life and the peace that our Savior offers to all who trust in him.

Let's pray together. Our Father, would you grant us in our hearts the certainty that we need about these things that we are considering this morning your grand plan of salvation and Lord, would you in the case of those who do not know the Savior convince their hearts of their need for this salvation.

We ask that you would do this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand for closing song.