

A Birth Like No Other

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[0 : 00] All right, please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 1, Luke chapter 1. You know, one of the things that I don't think it's always talked about or something that we always appreciate about the Christian faith is that we have a faith that is grounded in actual history.

It is a real history. It is not a fabricated history. If you spent any time studying any of the other religions of this world, there is a made-up history to some of them.

They speak of people who never lived, people groups that never lived, all in the hopes of somehow replicating what the Bible is or what Christianity and the Jewish faith was.

But Christian faith and the predecessor to it, the Jewish faith, is a real history. And because it's a real history, it's rooted in time. It's rooted with real people and a real culture.

And what makes it powerful, because it's got real people, there are people that experience real problems, real concerns, real pressures of life in which to contend with.

[1 : 21] And they have all of those moving parts of life working with them as they are called to follow after Jesus. As you know, in the New Testament, we have these four Gospels.

And it's very interesting because we have basically four points of view on the good news, which is the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen? And there's a purpose for those Gospels.

There's a purpose that there's four different points of view. It brings us into the life of the people during that age. And it helps us understand that this is not only true, but it reminds us just how human the people are.

If you're familiar with the Gospel of Matthew, this was an eyewitness account of one who walked with Jesus. He was an apostle, a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I also believe he was trained in the Jewish faith. And out of all the Gospels, he makes the strongest case for one of a Jewish background, connecting the Old Testament into the New Testament.

[2 : 34] He looks at the prophecies and the fulfillment of all those prophecies, which are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Mark, on the other hand, doesn't talk so much about the Old Testament.

But what he does is he spends his time on the powers of Jesus Christ as he's writing to an audience of Rome to demonstrate the power of Jesus that he exhibited while he was here on this earth.

And basically what he lays out for his readers is, hey, this is Jesus Christ. These are the miracles that he did. He is the real God. The Gospel of John, in case you did not know, was written many, many years later, decades later after the other three Gospels.

And there's a theological flavor to these Gospels. And we believe that John wrote his Gospel with the other Gospels in mind, kind of looking back over what Matthew, Mark, and Luke had written.

And he's kind of filling in the pieces and bringing a more, how do I say it, eternal perspective to those truths. And then we have this Gospel of Luke, where we're going to spend our time in today.

[3 : 54] Luke is different. Luke comes at it as a historian investigating real events. He's been charged with Paul to put together a Gospel to be used to the further Gentile population, the further Christians as Christianity outreach beyond the Jewish world into the Gentile world.

And he wanted them to have this information so that they could believe. Just take a look at Luke chapter 1, verse 1. He even lays out his goals and what he's doing out.

He says, Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who were from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you might have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

See, he's given us, and at that time, to write down information really wasn't a big deal. The people at the time actually relied on an oral tradition.

And they would memorize the stories, and they would pass the stories on to others. And their memories were far greater than us. Just think, today, one of the, in your lifetime in first century, the amount of new information that you would receive is less than what you would get in the New York Times newspaper on a weekend.

[5 : 48] Okay? We can devour more information on a weekend than they had an entire lifetime. Think about that. And that meant they were able to commit many of these stories to memory with almost perfect perfection.

But there came a time where they would start putting these accounts in writing. And this is what Luke does for us. Last week, if you were here with us, we looked at six truths about Jesus Christ that had to be true if Jesus was to be Jesus.

What I mean is, these things that we talked about, and I'll replay what those six are, that for Jesus to be Jesus, for Jesus to be the chosen Son of God, for Jesus to be the Messiah and the Savior of the world, these six facts had to be true of him.

One, he needed to be born of a woman. That goes back to the very first prophecy in Genesis 3.15. Jesus needed to be born the seed of a woman. That is who the eventual Messiah would come from. That explains to us why Jesus doesn't just show up the weekend before his crucifixion and say, hey, I'm willing to be a sacrifice for all your sins. That wouldn't work because it would defy what the prophets had already foretold.

[7 : 14] So one, he had to be born a woman and Jesus needed to live a normal life. The second thing is that Jesus had to be born of the promised seed of Abraham. Basically, Jesus needed to be a Jew.

He couldn't be a Hittite, a Philistine, or anyone else that we read about in the Old Testament. He had to specifically be born of a Jew. The third element is that he had to be born a descendant of David.

He had to have the right to the royal throne, both legally and through the bloodline. And that is actually what a fourth and fifth point are. That's what we read in the genealogy in Matthew 1. That is Jesus' legal entitlement to be the Messiah. And the genealogy we read in Luke is the bloodline that connects him to the Messiah.

And then we read the sixth reason and this is what I want to focus on this morning is Jesus needed to have a forerunner. Jesus needed someone to come before him to announce his arrival.

[8 : 24] So if you were a first century Jew, you knew your Bible, your Old Testament, if you were devout enough to know the prophecies of David, the prophecies of Isaiah, you knew sometimes during the rule of Rome, a Messiah would come.

And you would know the words of Malachi, which says, Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me.

And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. And the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

You see, it is impossible for Jesus to come and not have these truths about him happen. And more importantly today, it's important for Jesus to have been Jesus without John the Baptist.

So this morning, I want to talk about John the Baptist and I actually want to key in on some incredible truths that exist in this text that perhaps you haven't thought about.

[9 : 44] But I believe it truly reveals to us not only the humanity of Jesus and the humanity of the people that existed at that time, but he takes a part for us and whether we realize it or not, he's painting this picture of what it was like to be a first century Jew living in Israel waiting for the coming Messiah.

So that's my goal today and I hope to accomplish it by breaking down this text for you. So let me pray before I go any further. Dear God, just as we come to this incredible word which is found through Luke, this man who went about interviewing the saints and putting together this story for us. There's some incredible truths that we're going to see even in the precision of his words and the words that he uses. I pray that it would indeed capture our hearts and souls of the minds of those who lived there during that day.

Father, it was over 2,000 years ago in a different culture, a different land, a different language. But through your words, I believe even through our humanity we're able to identify with some of the

issues we're going to speak about.

And through these issues we're going to see our own need for a Savior as we're going to see a whole entire nation just yearning for the coming of the Messiah.

[11:21] So Father, I pray that you'll bring clarity to my voice and if my voice isn't clear, may you give those that hear me ears that are able to discern what I'm saying, oh Father, as we go into the depths of this incredible story of John the Baptist and the miracle of his birth.

We ask these things in your most holy and precious name. Amen. It is kind of funny, right, to begin the story of a Messiah with the story of John the Baptist, the forerunner.

We would think he could clear it up by just saying one came in the wilderness and declared Jesus. But like I said, I believe Luke has an extreme purpose in doing so.

And I want you to see that with me today. So take a look at verse 5, please. And we're going to go through this whole passage verse by verse that we read in Luke 1. Notice it begins, in the days of Herod, king of Judea.

If you're a Jew later on reading that text, you're not thinking this is the glory days. Boy, in the glory days of Israel, when everything was great and the people were sinless and they were as strong and mighty as possible, that is not the message you would be receiving.

[12:40] You'd be opening it up with when things were pretty much all depressing as all get out. If I could use a common vernacular. First of all, we are led by a man named Herod.

Herod, we understand, lived or ruled Israel from 40 BC and it's debatable whether he died between 1 BC and 4 BC.

We know that this was a disgrace because we're going to get into it. He is a foreign king. He's what's called a client king. Israel at that time is now a Roman province.

They ruled themselves independently for about 100 years as they wrestled control from the Greeks as you know and then Rome kind of comes in, tramples all people that are against them and they insert this man named Herod to rule over the land.

And when I say that he is a client king, it means he doesn't have kingship in the way we might think Queen Elizabeth has. He has kingship as it serves Rome.

[13:51] And the way to please and serve Rome is to pay Rome. So the only way you're able to stay in control of your land and be called the king is to make money for Rome.

And how would you do that? Same way they do it today. Tax the people. The whole goal of a client king is to be the most effective tax man that you can be.

You hire tons of people that are going to go out and they are going to attract all the taxes that they can. Now one of the things that I was reading this week that I found very interesting is that this area of the world was one of the most profitable provinces in all of the Roman Empire.

Just this little tiny strip of land. And as you know last week when we looked at the maps the reason why it was there was two major trade routes that went through that took the resources of Africa up to both Europe and Asia.

So it became a very profitable trade route. And people would set up businesses along these trade routes. And we're going to get into this later. But Israel became a very secular nation.

[15:12] In fact Greek became one of the most common languages that was spoken there because that was the business language. So if you wanted to do business you did it along those trade routes.

And those trade routes weren't very, how do I say, they weren't very Jewish. And when I say they weren't very Jewish what I mean is they weren't very religious.

religious. So a lot of the stories that we read in the Bible in the New Testament take place up off the trade routes. We're going to talk how the Jews were able to create little enclaves of towns where that is where they would practice their faith around the synagogues and they would try to keep the outsiders out.

But there's this unmistakable influence that is going on in the land at that time. So we have this man Herod who rules over them. A few facts of Herod.

One, he was an incredible leader. Anytime there was subversion he would put it down. He fought off contenders for his throne. Other people that might have rights to earn money he would just assassinate and get rid of them.

[16:20] That's quite one of the good reasons for an effective leader in first century Israel. Two, he had built entire cities. And what happens when you built the cities, you're giving, you're building the

economy.

You're giving people jobs. They're happy. They're going out. They're building the cities. He reconstructed the temple in Jerusalem. And he made it an incredible edifice.

And I'm going to be posting pictures on the online version of this. So you're going to be able to see the lavishness that he brought to Israel. And then he also built what is known as the Caesarea port, which became an incredible port.

For the Phoenicians, just a little bit south of there, which brought in even more trade through ships. So this guy was this brilliant, brilliant man. And he was actually, if you did not know, he was a Jew. He practiced the Jewish faith. He was a convert. But here's something. He was actually of Arab descent. And what he did is he adopted the Jewish religion.

[17:26] And when you had to understand how strong the Jewish religion in the world was, it's the only monotheistic religion of the day. Okay? Every Jew who wants to be a real practicing Jew wants to be near the temple as much as possible.

But it brings other people in. You start to do business with the Jews. You know what? I'm going to adopt that religion too. So these other people start becoming Jews. And you'd think that'd be a really great thing.

Well, there's one thing that Jews hated more than Gentiles. Guess what? Half Jews. People who kind of weren't all in on their religious faith.

And you know what? That's not so unusual because we're like that ourselves. Right? We know who carnal Christians are. We know there's some people that call themselves Christians.

But when we look at their lives and they're not really Christian. I remember when I was in university, I'm trying my best to live my faith and there was a guy at the other end of the hallway who would talk about how he was a Christian.

[18:26] But yet he was pretty much drunk and plastered and high all the time. And I think I spent most of the time trying to explain actually he's not a Christian. But he grew up with that hereditary Christian.

His parents were probably Christians. And all those type of things. And so this is kind of the atmosphere that when you hear that Herod is ruling over your land, this is what you're dealing with. not a lot of pride in your nation. Right? Something's wrong. And the thing is, you're too weak to do anything about it.

So what do you do? You start praying. Because there's only one person that can fix this. And it's God.

So you start praying for a Messiah to come. Because you know your attempts of trying to change the lay of the land are not strong enough.

[19:31] So this creates this incredible messianic expectation in the land. That there's almost this tinderbox, this simmering pot of hatred towards Rome, hatred towards the foreigners.

They're destroying everything you know about your faith that you read in the Old Testament about what the prophets talked about. You see so much impurity.

And God's been silent for 400 years. There's been no writings, no prophets, nothing.

And yet you know there's something so wrong. And you just start having that thought.

God, what are you going to do about this? What are you going to do about this country, this faith? I'm going to show you guys a quick story that you might not realize.

[20:39] Turn with me to Acts 5. Acts 5. Let me paint this scenario. Jesus has gone to heaven. Peter, the apostles, are now prophesying in the temple.

Many people are getting saved. Chief priests, and we're going to talk about that, are a corrupt organization at this point. And you have Peter and these unlearned men preaching about Jesus. People are getting saved, so they arrest them, throw them in jail. That night, an angel appear, opens up the prison, releases them, and instead of all the apostles you'd think would run from the hills and get away from the authorities, no, they're right back at it in the temple, preaching about Jesus Christ.

And at the time, they're healing people, and all these things are going on. But what's interesting is if you read the words in verse 36, and this is, the situation is, they bring Peter politely now before this council, and the high priest says, hey, I want you to stop preaching.

And they say, no way, Jose. We obey God, not man. We're going to go about doing what we're going to do. So they got pretty enraged and they wanted to kill them, but this guy, who was a

Pharisee, who was honored by a lot, named Gamaliel, says, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, guys.
[22 : 09] For before these days, it says, Thaddeus rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about 400, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

Take a look at verse 37. After him, and what he's dating is, it's called Judas the Galilean. Judas the Galilean rose up in 6 BC, fighting the Roman taxes.

And Josephus, the historian, actually records everything that he tried to do. But he was one of those guys, hey, I'm a Messiah. I can save you from Rome. Follow me.

Well, it didn't work so well for him. It said, after him, Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census, and drew away some of the people after him. Guess what? He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered.

Hey, Mark. No worries. It's okay. Want some help? It's okay, buddy.

[23 : 17] It's okay. It's all right. No, no, you're all right. No, no, you're fine, brother.

It's okay, buddy. It's okay. It's okay. Yes, of course. It's okay. mean, yeah.

It's okay. Now, in your world, and. Go, we're all right. Go, go, go, go. Now, yes, so what happens was so this guy Judas the Galilean rose up try to get this rebellion everything going and it says and he too perished and followed him who scattered and all who followed him were scattered verse 38 so in the present case I tell you keep away from these men and let them alone for if this plan or this undertaking is of man it will fail but if it is of God you will not be able to overthrow him you might even be found opposing God so that's telling us during that time there was that men rising up all the time people are looking for the Messiah the Jews they want to be saved so now let's go back to the text so one it dates this event at the end time of Herod's reign and it's happening in Judea verse 5 continues he says there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Abijah and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth as you all know all the Jewish worship at the time centered around the temple and it was so important for the Jewish faith to keep that temple life going because if you did not keep that temple life going there was a fear that God would abandon you you had somehow lost favor with God because why what happened remember 700 BC they were disobeying God took them exiled them 200 years later they were disobedient God came in ripped them out of their country again thankfully Cyrus Persian allows them to come back rebuilds the temple and so now we have this area where we're going to keep this Jewish religion going as best as we can so we can at least see the blessings of God on the people of Israel now when he's talking about just in these words about being the priest Zechariah the division of Abijah what this is telling us is that he was kind of like one of the priests and there's actually multiple divisions of priests in Israel and the way it worked is you had to be from the clan of Levi remember the Levites so there was 12 brothers that came from Jacob and they each were settled in the land of Israel but Levi was given no land but what God said I'm going to take your people and I'm going to give them an anointed task you're going to serve me in the temple so any person who was of the tribe of Levi their firstborn son would be consecrated to the priest and being in the temple your other sons would also or could serve in the temple as well but they would have a different role so the first son could serve and only a first son of a Levite priest of the Aaronic line could be the high priest but every other firstborn son of a in the tribe of Levi could be a priest and we're going to get into what some of the priest duties are but that's the first thing that you could do so that's what he's communicating to us here and wife Elizabeth was also of Aaron's descent so here you have this royal family line of priests going through and arriving here at this man named Zechariah the primary purpose of the high priests when they served in the temple is that they were to offer the sacrifices before God to the people as required by the law if you were one of the other priests some of the duties is that you would collect money you would work at the temple gates you would clean the temple you would be in charge of slaughtering the animals to be sacrificed you could be a musician but what we're learning here is that he is the division of Abijah what does that mean basically Moses divided up them into 24 sections and every 24 weeks you would serve one week in the temple then the other 23 weeks you would serve out in the land you with me on that so if you're one of these good priests these elevated first priests you only serve two weeks in the temple a year the rest of the time you would spend your time in the cities now what would they do in the cities one they were the judges if you're familiar with all the laws that we have in numbers Deuteronomy Leviticus right all those laws they were adjudicated by priests and and it doesn't really say this but as a Jew you were expected to live 10 to 15 miles away from a priest okay so what this

communicates to us is priests were involved in every part of a Jew's life that was where you saw the favorite of God that was where you were connected to God so here we are verse 6 and this is probably one of the most tragic lines in all the Bible and they were both righteous before God walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes why do you think it's important for Luke to point this out to us perhaps you're asking why is this a tragedy the tragedy of all this is all the priests were to be righteous before God and walking blamelessly in the commandments and the statutes of the Lord what we know at this time is the priests were not that they were corrupt political party that used their offices to take from the people to enrich themselves remember I talked to you about part of their role was to collect the tithes to collect the offerings they use those things to enrich themselves if you remember and I talked about this a couple of weeks ago when they came back from Persia Cyrus appointed the high priest as the political go-to guy God did not want it that way how easy religion can be corrupted by the world so when he tells us Luke is that that this man Zacharias was righteous before God he's a remnant he's a guy who's kept the faith through God's through God's silence of 400 years he's stayed pure to the Lord and this was an anomaly with the other men he served with that were doing such a holy role in God's people so what Luke is doing here he's telling us this is how bad it was in Israel it's not so bad that Rome rules over us it's not so bad that there is this king who's corrupt and he steals from us but even our priests even those that are supposed to be holy before the Lord are corrupt how do you keep the faith in a time like that you haven't heard from God for 400 years but there's this testimony of this couple people who are clinging to the promises that God has laid out and then we read in verse 7 but they had no child because Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years so not only is their political situation hopeless but for generations and generations just think for them to both be of the tribe of Aaron and for him to be a high priest it meant his dad had to be a high priest his grandfather had to be a priest his great-grandfather had a priest his great-grandfather

[33 : 15] and it had to go on and all of a sudden they're left with this situation of over a thousand years of faithfulness in this family coming to an end so you have this political situation that's hopeless but yet we get this glimpse into this and when I say this is real history these are real people with real feelings with real hopes real dreams of carrying on their family line and it's not happening but he continues to serve as a priest and he continues to come and do his duty before the Lord trusting in him verse 8 now while he was serving as a priest before God when his division was on duty so like I said there was 24 divisions Abhijai was the 8th division according to the custom the priesthood he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense and the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense okay this is probably the most understated event in all of history that's like you guys saying

I was a major league baseball player and oh yeah BK was the guy who hit the home run that won the World Series for the Toronto Blue Jays and you just kind of pass over it like it was nothing right you only got to do this duty before the Lord once in your life that's it to get to go in and what you do is you go in and you scrape the offerings off on the sacrificial place where they burn the animal he would scrape it in and take it within to the inner sanctum and they would burn it and be the incense to the Lord and this is just outside the holiest of holies and in the Jewish temple you had this room where it used to be this is where God's presence where only on one day of the year the high priest could go in on the day of atonement so he's as close to the holiest of holies in a place where he's blessing God offering this worship to God with this incense and all the people of Israel outside that are faithful who come to the temple are praying this is a huge event this is a blessing and he's only going to do this once in his life and God in his incredible grace decides to bless him even more verse 11 there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense and Zacharias was troubled when he saw him and fear fell upon him but the angel said to him do not be afraid Zacharias for your prayer has been heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall call his name

John I want you to understand something here this is something he and his wife have been praying their whole lives for to bear a child who will continue in that line okay and it's kind of interesting but I want to put attention verse 16 14 sorry and you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth verse 15 for he will be great before the Lord and he must not drink wine or strong drink and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make

ready for the Lord people prepared so here's this guy who's righteous who's right before the Lord who's faithful and doing all these things and this is just a message for you guys okay notice what happens right this is something he's praying for and what does it say in verse 17 and he will forego him and Zacharias said to the Lord said to the angel how shall I know this for I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years how easy it is to be human right just think this guy's been praying for this his whole entire life he gets the honor of going into the closest to the holiest of holies he's been praying for a child an angel shows up hey I've been here

I've been God's been listening he hears you he's gonna give you this child and the first thing what does he do doubt is that not human right like that's us right and it's these little particular things that we see in scripture that make this so real so we know what happens the angel silences him he's not able to talk and for the first time in over 400 years God speaks again and he advances this this forerunner to this righteous man who's conducting his holy duties before the Lord and he gives him this news one that John will be a lifetime Nazarite Nazarite now what this means is this was even holier than a priest to some degree is he was going to consecrate himself to the holiness of the Lord and what he was going to do he was going to live outside from the people he was never going to cut his hair and we're going to read later on John the Baptist lifestyle and food habits weren't exactly our food habits to say the least but what's interesting in that if you would have heard that you knew that the priests had to be clean cut individuals all of a sudden you got a

Nazarite which is the exact opposite of a clean cut individual so it's the first hint that your firstborn son is not going to be a priest like you okay it doesn't pick up on that but as we will see in the forerunner and I'll tell you the reason why because the Messiah is coming and we're no longer going to need priests because the great high priest the lamb the perfect lamb is coming to be offered an eternal sacrifice so we're never going to need priests we're not going to need the sacrificial system we're not going to need the temple right just in this little quick innocuous statement we can pull out so much truth from this one he was to turn many Israelites to God but more importantly this man was supposed to be the fulfillment of the promise made by Malachi concerning the forerunner of the Messiah so not only is the news coming that I will have a son but there's someone even greater coming after him skip ahead to verse 57 verse 57 same chapter now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth and she bore a son and her neighbors and relatives heard that the

[41 : 10] Lord had shown great mercy on her to her and they rejoiced with her this is exactly as the angel said it would and on the eighth day when they came to circumcise the child 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 the father because he cannot speak so they figured out some sort of sign language 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 open and his tongue loosened 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 heart saying what then will this child be for the hand of the Lord was with them notice that word fear fear fear is often associated with the gospels that you truly understand that

God is at work that this is indeed been a work of God you remember this storm and there's a few times the apostles are with Jesus Christ in the storm and Jesus Christ calms the storm the first reaction by the apostles is fear because they finally realize they're in the presence of one who is God who can still the storm and the waves of the sea with but a word so we see this going down and even here now although it's a time of joy there's this understanding that God has done something here he's been in our presence and he hasn't been in our presence for 400 years but they show a right response fear because they understand it's a supreme work that only God can do and how are we to respond to God's presence when it comes upon us worship worship take a look at verse 67 and his father

Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied saying blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David and 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 Zacharias

knows exactly what this means his son is to be the forefather the forefront runner to the Messiah the Messiah is coming the Messiah is coming in holiness and righteousness before him all our days and you child will be called the prophet of the most high and you can just see him holding his young son

John 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 that's beautiful that's a hopeless man who's been holding firm to the Lord for his entire life and God is giving him this blessing verse 80 and the child grew and became strong in spirit and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel you see Zacharias knows that God has raised up the horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David the prophecies the final lamb the final sacrifice is upon us they will no longer need any temple they will no longer need any sacrifice they will no longer need anyone to throw the yoke off of Rome because the one who can do it shall come and next week we're going to be looking at how the Messiah arrives what's interesting we see the contrast the cheering the family weeping glorying at the coming of John but when we know when Jesus come there isn't much fanfare there's shame there's hurt there's embarrassment and we're going to go into next week exactly what it would have been like to be there in that culture when Jesus was born and I'm going to just to give you guys a little bit of warning I'm going to destroy a little bit of that Christmas story you've heard because it certainly wasn't a joyous time as they came to that point but because

[47 : 32] Mary and Joseph were visited by an angel they were able to keep hoping continue to hope and hope and hold strong as Zacharias and Elizabeth did let's pray wow it's such an incredible story Lord and there's so many things that appear just even within the white spaces of the text reminds me of our own lives sometimes we act we say and we do but within sometimes our motivations our desperation hopelessness things we do thinking we are strong we're actually really weak things we're too afraid to do we feign strength and pretend we don't want to do them father it's an easy thing to lose hope I know there's friends and family here in this congregation alone who've had to endure pain they've had to endure situations of life which they thought would bring shame and embarrassment upon them not understanding that your strength and your forgiveness is especially meant for them it's meant for those who call out to you it's called out it's meant for those who pray for you who call out to you who hope when there is no hope feel hopelessness yet continue to hang on by a thread understanding that our faith is not based on the strength of our faith but it's truly based on the strength of the one we have faith in it's in you

Jesus this is such a human story and we see such a wonderful result father there's this way you came into the world that no one could ever say that you came in a favored way or a favored disposition it's like you purposely made it as hard as possible for yourself and your parents to come into this world so no false accusation could be made against you but I also believe it's so that you can identify with the most desperate of us the most hopeless of us the most hurting of us the most shameful and lost of us that you are able to identify with all these feelings the moments when we're stuck in sin and shame but we're going to see how you redeem us you make us whole you call us to the one when we don't even feel right about being called but you're so great you're so amazing and father

I pray that we would truly come to an understanding of how great you are even in the child stories may we get a glimpse of the love that you have for us and that we can always sing about the deep love of Jesus no matter where we are in life no matter the decisions we've made but we control we can hold true to the one who is forever true father we ask these things in your most holy and blessed name amen