

Delivered to Serve

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 June 2010

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Now, let us turn again to Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 1, Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, and reading verses 74 and 75.

We'll read in 73 where it says there, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, and it sees really these words from the very end of 73, 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. Now, from verse 57 onwards, we have there recorded for us the birth of John the Baptist. I'm just going to say one or two very brief things here because we've been going through the Gospel of Luke, so I'm not going to spend much time looking at that, but just one or two things by way of background.

And one of the things that strikes us as we have considered something of John the Baptist is that there was drama surrounded this man's life, all the time, from his birth to his death.

[1 : 24] His birth was unusual, his death was unusual, and in fact his life right throughout was different. Now, we find that John, who Jesus himself described, and he said that among those born of women, that there is not a greater than John the Baptist.

And what was recorded here for us was that eight days after John was born, the crowd, all the neighbors, the friends, the relatives had gathered together, and they were expecting to give this little baby his name.

This is at the same time we read there that he came to circumcise the child and was on the eighth day, and this is obviously the day that they would give the name to the child. And they assumed that his name would be the name that his father had, Zechariah.

But Elizabeth said, no, his name will not be Zechariah. His name is going to be John. And they were saying, well, that's strange. There is no John in your family.

And as was very much the custom then, as was often the case in our own parts, and indeed in many places of the world, is that names often run through families.

[2 : 48] And even maybe the first name might be different, but very often, as here, we often have double-barrel names, and maybe it's a second name that will hold on to a family name.

So we do still tend to quite often do the same sort of thing ourselves. So they were saying, well, why John? There's nobody within the family that has the name John.

But they made signs to Zechariah himself as to what the name of the baby should be. Now, as you remember, Zechariah had been struck dumb.

An angel had appeared to him in the temple telling him what was to happen, and he refused to believe. And the angel told him that as a sign of the fulfillment, as a sign that this prophecy that was being given him was absolutely true, he was going to be struck dumb.

And that's exactly what happened. From that moment on, he couldn't speak a word. So they made signs to Zechariah as to what the name would be. And I think it's very obvious from this that as they made signs, that he wasn't just dumb, but that he must have been deaf as well.

[4 : 06] Because if he wasn't deaf, all they would have had to do would be said to him, well, what are you going to call the baby? And he would write down what the name would be. So if they're making signs to him, it's very obvious that he wasn't just struck dumb, but that he was struck deaf as well.

So that he had these nine months where he was both deaf and dumb. And so Zacharias made a sign for something so that he could write, and he wrote the name John.

And when he wrote that name John, it's not a big word, four letters, but it was an act of faith. It was an act of obedience. Because way back, this is exactly what had been told when Zacharias had been told, and he'd been given everything very clearly set out before.

If we had read that back at the beginning in verse 13, 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.

And at that time he was unbelieving. Now he is believing. And often we think of faith as some great thing that we do.

[5 : 33] This was a great step of faith on the part of Zacharias. He wrote down just that one word, John. But it was an act of faith.

Because he believed the message from God, that the name was to be John. It was an act of obedience. And the moment he did that, his speech came back, and everything was normal. And you see that the Lord, the Lord takes note very, very much of both our obedience and disobedience. Both our faith and our lack of faith.

These things are noted greatly by the Lord. Because remember, without faith it is impossible to please God. Did we come here tonight by faith?

Now, of course, I know that when we're in Christ, we've accepted the Lord Jesus by faith. But as we live out our days, are we just going through motions?

[6 : 33] Are we doing things for ourselves? Or are we doing things by faith? Do we have a focus upon the Lord? Are we seeing the Lord in what we're doing? Because this is vital to what we are.

It's vital to our effectiveness as Christians. It's vital to everything about us. Are we looking to the Lord in all that we do? Well, anyway, for John, these nine months must have been a great learning process.

You know, the Lord doesn't afflict his people willingly. He doesn't do it randomly. He doesn't just say, Well, I'm going to afflict this person there and that person there, and I'm going to afflict this person.

There is always a purpose and a reason. Although it might be absurd to you, you may not understand it. But you know, at the end of it all, you will praise and thank the Lord.

And that's exactly what Zechariah did. Because the moment he got his speech back, he went into, he began to prophesy, and verse 68 tells us that he begins to bless the Lord.

[7 : 46] Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. That's the very first thing he does. He blesses the Lord as soon as his speech is back. And you know, at the end of the day, that's what we'll do as well.

And maybe some of you, right now, you're saying to yourself, I might find that hard because what you're going through just now might be incredibly difficult. It might be really painful.

It might be breaking your heart. It might be making life so difficult. Others don't know what you're having to go through. But the Lord does. And he's in it with you.

And he has given you this. It didn't happen by itself. The Lord has given you this. But he has a purpose in it. And it's the purpose. Let us remember this.

We are so bound by this world and governed by the world and governed by the way the world thinks that we think we know what is best for ourselves.

[8 : 46] And we measure it by the world's ways and standards. The Lord looks at it in a completely different way. The Lord is looking at our soul. He's looking at our future.

He's looking at what he's wanting to make us. And his great purpose is to make us like his son Jesus. That's a father's great purpose for his children is to make all his people like his son Jesus, conforming them to his image.

And so for each one of us, he will work. He will mold. He will shape. And we've got to remember that. And you might be saying to yourself, well, I can't understand.

And you look around and you see people prospering and you see good things happening. And you're saying, well, if only this could happen to me. And the Lord says, actually, it wouldn't be for your good. It might be for your temporal good.

You might get on all right in the world and you may get this and that, but your soul will be impoverished. Your soul won't flourish. Your soul won't grow. So we've always got to remember this, that the Lord's priority for us is the development and the enrichment of our soul.

[10 : 01] And if we remember that, it'll help us so much. And this is one of the things, obviously, that Zacharias was able to come to understand. And so he blesses the Lord and he begins by praising God for visiting his people and redeeming his people.

And as we know, to redeem is to buy back. It is to pay a particular price to set free the prisoner, to set free the slave. And that's exactly what Jesus did.

He came to see, he came, he visited us and he redeemed. He, that's why he's termed the Redeemer. He paid the price. He was the price.

And so he has set us free. And then Zacharias goes on to talk about the victory in battle. He's raised up a horn and the horn, of course, the horn of salvation is a, it's a symbol of power and victory.

And then he goes on to say, as we have here in our text, just look at this very briefly, that he says, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear and holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

[11 : 14] Two very brief things here. First of all, what the Lord has done for us. He has delivered us. Delivered us from the hand of our enemies.

And the purpose of that deliverance, the second thing is that we might serve him. First, we are delivered and secondly, we are delivered in order to serve.

Let's not forget that. We have been delivered so that we may serve. Now we are delivered, of course, as we know from various things. There are various things. For instance, we've been delivered from the law.

Now, of course, at one level, that doesn't mean that the law of the Lord has no place in the life of the Christian. Of course, it has. It has a great place.

In fact, it is at the very center of the Christian's life. As we're told, the Christian is someone who endeavors after new obedience. And God's law becomes very, very important to the believer.

[12 : 18] And there is a desire to adhere to the law. Now, of course, we know we fail. But there is still this desiring to walk in God's ways and according to God's law.

But we are delivered from the law with regard to earning our salvation by the law. You see, God has said to us, as we are naturally, by nature, God has said to everybody, do this and you will live.

There's my law. Do it and you will live. Can we do it? Of course, we can't. And the moment we fail, God's wrath and God's condemnation and God's curse falls down upon all those who break his law. So you see, though God is saying to us, do it, we can't. And we are then made under the law. We become, the law, the curse of the law rests upon us.

God's wrath is upon us. But that's what Jesus has come to do. He has fulfilled the law and he has delivered us from that.

[13 : 36] Christ has redeemed us. This is what the Bible says. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us. Isn't that incredible?

We were the ones who were under the curse. And Christ said, I'm going to come and I'm going to take the curse of God on myself so that you might be free.

So that's the first thing we're delivered from. And then we're again, we're told from the Bible, we're delivered from sin. Now, you don't need to tell me and I don't need to tell you.

Neither of us need to be able, and not for one moment are we going to say it, that we are delivered from indwelling sin. Of course we know we're not. Sin rampages, it rages, it hurts, it hurts, it wars, it's there all the time, it confuses us, it battles, we have the battles with it.

And there are times that we feel that sin is smothering us and strangling us, and there are times we feel we're being choked by it and that it's got the power over us.

[14 : 52] I often think the picture that we have in the, or the, the song of Jonah as he's down in the belly of the, of the, the great fish and he's sinking, as it were, way down and he's talking about being entangled by the, by the weeds and, and the seed, like the, the, all these sea, the seaweed are way down in the ocean.

and, you know, the believer often feels like that. We feel we're being just tangled up and that we're sinking. But, we mustn't go on how we feel.

We've got to go on what the word says, and this is what the word says, sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

You see, the Lord has broken the power of sin in our life. In, every single person, sin has like a, like a chain that is wrapped round and that chain goes all the way into the depth of hell.

And that chain will drag us all into hell because this is what sin does. Sin destroys. Sin is death.

[16 : 12] Spiritual death. Physical death. Eternal death. And there is only one who can sever that chain. There is only one who can set us free and that's Jesus.

And that's what he did. And that's why the dominion of sin is broken. It still affects our life. And we all know of it. And we all grieve because of it. But its power has been broken.

It still damages us but it will never destroy us. And that's why we've got to take, that is why we have to believe the word. Because if we don't, we'll get down.

We'll be down in the dumps and we'll say, I'm never going to get free from this sin. No, you can't yourself. You can't. But Jesus has done it. And we must ask the Lord that he may reveal to us more and more of just that freedom that is found through the deliverance from sin.

Then again, we have been delivered from the power of Satan. The Bible tells us, for God has delivered them from the power of darkness and translated them into the kingdom of his dear son.

[17 : 24] It's not wonderful. These are incredible enemies, sin and Satan. And yet the Lord has delivered. Now again, just like sin, Satan is on the move all the time.

And Satan tempts us and he hounds us and he bruises us and he causes us no end of damage. And yet there are times, sometimes we feel that the temptations are going to become too much for us.

Maybe tonight you are experiencing real temptation and you don't even know it's temptation. And you don't know what's happening to yourself. And it's really getting to you.

You might be tempted to doubt that you're a Christian, tempted to doubt that you were ever born again. You may be tonight and you know it's amazing as we come near times of communion how Satan will do all in his power to spoil and to rob your enjoyment of the communion.

Be quite persuaded of it and I'm sure as you reflect over your life you will see lots of times where Satan and you don't realize it at the time it's afterwards you think you say he got me again.

[18 : 39] We need to be on our guard because it might sometimes be little things but so often you'll have something may happen something simple things and yet there are things which will try you and spoil you but all the time Satan Satan is around trying to spoil the difficulty and sometimes you feel one day I'm going to be overcome and I'm going to be overwhelmed but let us remember what the Lord has said God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted above that which you are able but will also with the temptation make a way of escape so that you may be able to bear it.

That's what the Lord says Lord is saying to you tonight I know you're being tempted the Lord Jesus Christ he knows all about temptation worse than you have ever experienced in all points Jesus was tempted like as we are yet without sin that was the differentiation that was the difference but Jesus was tempted in all points you know it's an extraordinary version but that's what it says and when you're bruised and battered by the tempter you go to the Lord and say Lord please help me and Jesus it tells us that let's remember this we have a high priest it says who has been touched with the feeling of our infirmities or the feeling of our weaknesses he knows and that's a beauty where you can go and share with him he understands and he's there to help so that you will not be overcome and finally we'll just say with regard to this deliverance there are many other things we could say we've been delivered from death not the physical aspect of it we have to go through that but we have been delivered from its terror from its horrors that's why the believer is able to say oh death where is your sting oh grave where is your victory do you know it's incredible when you see the believer die and you see somebody facing death facing it with a confidence facing it why are they able to face it with confidence because the sting has been removed yes it's still an enemy and it's something we still naturally recoil from but we know that it cannot damage us cannot and what a deliverance that is and it's no wonder that we ought to be praising the

Lord when you think of the deliverance from the law from sin from Satan from the death what enemies but then we see why we're delivered here it's an order that we may serve that's what it says that being delivered from the hand of our enemies we might serve now you'll see that this serving this is a service that is done out of love it's not a service of fear or slavish in any way it's a loving service and the Lord is the one who empowers us to serve and you know my friend the great joy of the believer is found in serving do you know the most miserable believers are those who don't serve the Lord at all those who may spend their time everywhere else but in the things of the Lord they won't know the joy of the Lord real joy is found as we serve him in his word in prayer and in all the different things that are set out for us as we go along and we see here that service is a privilege because it says to grant us that we might serve him it's a privilege and let us remember this is something that Jesus went to the cross to do let's not forget this this is all part of

Jesus's work to grant us the privilege of serving him it's not an amazing thing that we have been called all of us into the service of the king if you're a believer tonight you have been called into the service of the king sometimes we think that it's only for certain people not at all it's for everyone every single believer has been called into the service of the king and it's an instinct of grace the

moment you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ you want to serve him what can I do for the Lord that's what right from the very beginning you know if somebody says that a Christian and at the same time will say I certainly don't want to do anything for the Lord in his kingdom nothing you know that would raise a real question mark because the very instinct of grace wants to serve you remember a classic example of this is

Saul of Tarsus Saul the very first thing he asks who are you Lord and Jesus tells him I am Jesus I am the one that you've been persecuting and then when he comes to discover who Jesus is the next question he says is Lord what will you have me to do do you remember you cast your mind back to when you came into the kingdom and didn't you have that sense of that you want to serve the Lord you want to help you want to do you want to you don't know what it is but you have this and you're saying to the Lord Lord use me it might be in your home it might be in your family when we think of service that doesn't automatically mean that you're going to go to the front line in the church when we talk of the church in the church building the church of course is ultimately made up of all the believers many people are sent like legion back home legion wanted to go with

[25 : 22] Jesus when he was delivered he was one who knew all about this deliverance and then he wanted to go and serve the Lord and the Lord says well my service for you legion is go back home and tell your family and your friends what great things the Lord has done for you that was his service and very often that is our service but the thing is that wherever the Lord puts us that we must be ready to be used for him because at the end of the day it's not about us it's about him and we serve him we're told without fear in holiness and righteousness some people see holiness with respect to what we are before God and righteousness with respect to what we are before one another holiness of heart before God and a right way dealing rightly in a right manner with one another and so this service is at the very heart of our life and that's what takes us to the table

Lord what will you have me to do the Lord says well I'll tell you one thing I want you to witness on my behalf and one of the ways you witness on my behalf is doing this in remembrance of me remember what it says for every time that's part of what we read out when we take the bread and wine for as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine you do show forth the Lord's death till he comes it's powerful what a witness is that not service every time you take that cup to your mouth and you drink of it you are witnessing to everybody around and everybody is on looking Jesus is mine he has delivered me and I am now in his service the service of the king and I'm doing this out of love because he has loved me and you see everything is tied in and we serve him because he has come with the servant's heart he is the king but he came as a servant if he hadn't come as a servant we wouldn't have been delivered he had to come as a servant and now he is the king and he is asking us in turn to serve him and we see that that service it says that we might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days not just on the Lord's day or in certain places but always and you know that service when it begins it continues because it's all our days it's forever as long as I live really that's what it's saying and that service will go on forever and ever and ever isn't that what you want and I believe that all the Lord's people will say yes that's what I want I want to serve the Lord it's your greatest joy it's the greatest happiness it's the greatest thing that we can do in this world is to serve the Lord wherever he has put us in whatever way that we can let us pray Lord our God we give thanks for all thy gracious goodness to us for thy pity towards us for the love the love that has been poured out for us and we pray that we in turn might be willing to serve the

Lord all our days we give thanks for the operation of grace which makes it an instinct in our heart where we too have to say Lord what will you have me to do bless us then we pray encourage all thy people here tonight and we pray for any who might be wanting to make that declaration of their love to the Lord encourage them we pray and we give thanks that thou are the God who will not let his people go ever bless us and take away our sin in Jesus name Amen