

4—Advent—Luke 1.57-80—God Has Visited and Redeemed

- I. Introduction
 - a. We are naturally drawn to stories that paint the picture of those who have succeeded when everything was against them. The QB at Georgia who went from a walk-on to a Heisman candidate. Or a manager getting his shot to play like that of Rudy.
 - b. The news stations will pound you with their bad news stories and then through in that tear-jerker story of someone doing some amazing things or the tear-jerker story of someone who can't catch a break.
 - c. Presidents use them to push their agendas. The media justifies voting for a Heisman candidate whose numbers aren't anywhere close for that individual award. I remember getting a trophy in the city baseball league even though we lost every game that year.
 - d. I suppose it's possible to like this story about Elizabeth for some of the same reasons. But it's entirely possible for you to love this sentimental story even with a tear and not love the person or even worse brush by what God does in this story.
- II. Main Point
 - a. The main point is not Elizabeth giving birth to a son but the main point is God displays his mercy to redeem us that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
- III. Outline
 - a. Rejoicing at the mercy of God in the birth of Elizabeth's son
 - b. This Son's Chosen Name
 - c. Zachariah Restored and the people tremble
 - d. The Hymn of Zachariah: praising God for visiting and redeeming his people
- IV. Exposition
 - a. As we break into this new section in the story, we find out God's plan has come to fruition through Elizabeth giving birth to a son and all those living around her respond in praise.
 - i. Luke begins: And the time was fulfilled to Elizabeth to give birth. It sounds like it had been planned and that set day has come. And of course, it was predicted by the Lord.
 1. That's an obvious theme running through the story of the Bible: things happen just as the Lord said they will.
 2. The angel visited Zachariah in the temple and gave him the birth announcement. He did not believe which made Gabriel angry. Therefore, Zachariah was made mute and more than likely deaf.
 - a. We should not be happy about unbelief either but we understand his unbelief. Most people realize the impossibility of he and his wife having a child in their old age and Elizabeth was known as the barren one.
 - b. We can also relate to his unbelief because like many people, he had prayed for a son but had long since given up. And he prayed because like most people, he knows he is powerless to change Elizabeth's ability to bear a child.
 - i. In other words, no one can say with any authority that they will have a child and add to it that their child will be a son except God.
 1. No ultrasound needed.
 - ii. No doubt in her culture, Elizabeth felt worthless. She described her situation as a disgrace among her people.
 - iii. Yet, God is the God of reversals. He turns her reproach into rejoicing.
 - ii. A surprise comes to the neighbors when Elizabeth gives birth to a son.
 1. How would you describe what happened in this situation? No doubt some of you have experienced this or you have prayed for people who were unable to have children. When a child was born, how did you understand that?

- a. They may have gone through various things their doctor recommended and they found something that worked.
 - b. I ask this question because my guess is we don't think of it the way Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives thought about it.
 - i. They think God magnified his mercy towards her. They think God did this. With lovingkindness and compassion, God caused this family to have a baby.
 - ii. And when the people saw Elizabeth's great need and that God had shown her great mercy, they rejoiced with her!
- 2. There's a parallel passage in Genesis where God shows mercy but the neighbors have no clue nor do they care.
 - a. Here Lot is the recipient of God's mercy. (Gen. 19:19) ¹⁹ Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life.
 - i. What happened to Lot's neighbors (same word used in Gen. 19:25)? They were destroyed.
 - b. Much of the world is like Sodom. They think they can live however they want. They think they are entitled to have a child or dispose of a child. They write their own rules.
- 3. May we be different than the world!
 - a. Let us be a people who praise God for his mercy towards us even in the birth of a child.
 - b. May we walk by God's ways.
 - c. May we value life in every way.
 - d. May we be a people who give thanks to God for all things!
 - e. We can't do this unless we see this as God displaying compassion towards Elizabeth and not a tear-jerker story.
- b. Now, according to the law, this new baby boy was to be circumcised on the eighth day and the neighbors come along calling him Zachariah but this child already has a chosen name.
 - i. The law states very clearly in **Leviticus 12:3** And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.
 - 1. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant. And I'm sure more needs to be said but I think we need to ask a different question. Why was this required on the eighth day?
 - a. I ask this question because this ultimately gets at the reason John and Jesus were born.
 - b. Elizabeth could not go to the temple because she was unclean for seven days. (Lev. 12:2) "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. And verse in Lev. 12 says (Lev. 12:4) She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed.
 - i. "In other words, impurity is defined with respect to the sanctuary and more importantly, in terms of one's acceptability within the worshipping community. The sense of impurity is thus defined with respect to the goal of the covenant and goal of creation, i.e. the worship of God. As the man and woman were cast off from God's presence in the Garden of Eden, so the one who is unclean cannot come before God in his sanctuary." (Sailhamer 110-111)

- ii. I'm sure you might be thinking, "Why is a woman unclean for something she had no control over? This is just how childbirth works. This is the way God made her."
- iii. There are numerous other things that cause one to be unclean, many of which would be considered unintentional like touching a dead body. But what about the Gentile who knows nothing about the law?
- iv. Are you unclean? And as a conversation I recently had with a man who seemed to think he was a pretty good guy, I said you know there's more than just your outward action that God holds accountable.
 - 1. Remember last week Mary mentions those who are proud in their thoughts. One can commit adultery in their thoughts. One can be that of a murderer for being angry in your heart.
 - 2. Paul says in (Eph. 5:5) For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.
 - 3. The story of Christmas is the story of redeeming the unclean that we might be restored to what Creation was meant to be—the worship of God in his presence forever.
- ii. Well, let's continue the story to see how God works to save his people. Here they are at the temple and Elizabeth and Zachariah obey God's laws for uncleanness and circumcision of their son.
 - 1. Usually, the norm is to name your baby at birth. But in this case, that seems to have not happened yet.
 - 2. In fact, the neighbors have taken it upon themselves and were calling him Zachariah.
 - 3. Elizabeth response in v. 60, "No; he shall be called John." (Future tense)
 - a. Like good neighbors who know you really well, they put up a fuss.
 - i. "None of your relatives is called by this name."
 - 1. See, they know the entire family tree and they are shocked that Elizabeth has stepped outside what they know to be normal.
 - ii. They are not satisfied to let mom name her child so they get Zachariah's attention.
 - 1. Remember, he is still unable to speak. He asks for a writing tablet.
 - 2. Zachariah confirms that not only will his son be called John but in fact his name IS John. (Present tense)
 - iii. The neighbors and relatives begin to see something strange is happening. I don't think we can really get how odd this was to them. It was so abnormal that they marvel at it.
 - b. I think it's important to note that Zachariah obeyed the message given to him from the Lord concerning the chosen name of his son.
 - i. No matter the very persistent pressure of his neighbors and longstanding cultural norms, he did exactly as he was told.
 - 1. (Lk. 1:13) and you will give him the name John.
 - 2. We certainly need to say, rather it happened exactly as God said it would.
 - 3. So what's going on?

- c. Well, God had promised that when these things take place, Zachariah would be able to speak again. Here is our third point: Zachariah Restored and the people tremble
- i. Gabriel said this back in (Lk. 1:20) you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."
 1. Notice what happens in (Lk. 1:64) And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.
 - a. What would be the first thing you said after being silenced for about 9 months?
 - b. Zachariah praises God!
 - i. God is the One who closed his mouth and he was the One who opened it.
 - ii. The neighbors not only know their family tree but they also know that God did this to Zachariah. It was no medical issue.
 2. The nosy neighbors and relatives are beginning to understand that something amazing is happening. Through all of these things—Elizabeth conceiving in her old age and barrenness, them not naming their son from someone in the family, Zachariah now suddenly being able to speak—God is showing his great mercy to his people.
 - a. How do I know this?
 - i. (Lk. 1:65-66) ⁶⁵ And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, ⁶⁶ 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.
 - ii. They tremble with fear and excitement; with wonder and with more questions because they know God has visited his people.
- d. Now, Zachariah explains in song what God is up to. The reason for his song of praise is our next and final point: God has visited and redeemed his people
- i. Now, unmuted and filled with the Holy Spirit, Zachariah prophesies.
 - ii. Like Mary, he blesses the Lord God of Israel. Why? Because he visited and worked redemption for his people. To redeem is to make a payment. That payment is for the sin and uncleanness of his people. That payment will cost Jesus his life!
 1. The neighbors understood that God had visited them but they did not know for sure what to think of this visit.
 - a. The promise of this redemption was rooted in the promised child of Genesis 3:15 who would crush the head of the serpent.
 - i. This child to come is described as a horn of salvation.
 1. Who knows what horn means in the bible?
 - a. It means strength. If you've ever watched lions attack the cape buffalo you are in for a show. They take those horns and flip those lions in the air like rag dolls.
 - b. Well, one day we will see Jesus with that lion who lurks around seeking someone to devour impaled by the horn of Jesus and toss him in the lake of fire.
 - ii. That child will also be from the house of David.
 1. That's why the bible makes clear that Joseph was of the line of David.
 2. God had made a promise to David that one of his offspring would reign forever!
 - iii. And we know these things because of what Zachariah sings, namely

1. V. 69...as God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets form of old.
 - a. What did they speak of?
 - i. V. 71...that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
- iv. I think you can read these verses, particularly verses 71-74 and they sound very nationalistic.
 1. This salvation is for the nation of Israel.
 2. This salvation is rescue them from their enemies and satan is not the only enemy. At the moment, Rome is their enemy. Other Gentile nations have been their enemies. They have been hated and held captive in the grip of their powerful hand.
 - a. But One more powerful than all the nations is coming to save them. Indeed. Messiah is coming!
 3. You might be wondering, is this salvation for us Gentiles too?
 - a. Why yes! In fact, if we are to be saved it must be by Israel's God...Israel's Messiah.
 - b. And in doing so, we become part of Israel. We lay down our allegiance to anyone else and bow the knee to King Jesus.
 - c. We have access to God and these promises to be rescued through what? Voting? Armies? Force? Human effort?
- iii. Oh no. It's through what Zachariah's son whose name is John came to prepare the way for.
 1. He has come to give knowledge of salvation to his people
 - a. And what information do they need?
 - i. They need to know that they forgiveness of sins is possible THROUGH the tender mercy of our God!
 - ii. How will he show mercy?
 1. In v. 78 he describes this beautiful scene of the sunrise visiting us from on high.
 - a. Jesus' return!
 - b. (Rev. 19:11-16) ¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

2. The peace and goodwill to men cannot happen in a nation or in a person unless you have received the mercy of God in Christ.
3. Jesus has come for those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide them into the way of peace.
 - a. Jesus is our peace. He has made peace with God concerning our sin. And for all those who reject the peace he offers, they have to pay for their own sin before the holy God of Creation.
 - i. And that's why hell is so hot and so long. Only Jesus can rescue and redeem us.

V. Response

- a. To receive forgiveness in Jesus is to receive Jesus as the center of your life. Everything revolves around him. Everything you do is for his glory.
 - i. Zachariah states clearly the end purpose of God's mercy show to his people.
 1. God's mercy in sending Jesus was for this purpose: (Lk. 1:74-75) ⁴ that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve/worship him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
 - ii. Does that describe you?
 1. Or is something else at the center of your life? You need only look at your life for the evidence.
 2. Do you love Jesus or just the idea of Jesus?
 3. Do you love music or the God we sing about?
- b. Does Jesus own you?
 - i. If he does then you will rejoice with those he has purchased by his blood.
 1. Can you sing with a sincere conscience this last song, Silent Night?
 2. "With the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord at Thy birth; With the angels let us sing alleluia to our King; Christ the Savior is born"?
 3. Do you love the real person Jesus?