

December 7, 2025
The King is Coming: Zechariah's Song
Luke 1:67-79
Vernon Advent Christian Church

Introduction...We watch a lot of classic musicals at our house. Some of our favorites that Anna really likes are Calamity Jane, Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music. And of course, at this time of year, we love watching White Christmas. The thing about musicals is that unless you find yourself in the middle of a flash mob, typically you won't experience a time when everyone around you suddenly breaks out in perfectly choreographed dance and songs in four part harmonies. Although that would make life more interesting, those sort of things just don't happen.

However, when we look at the first chapter of Luke, I can't help but picture in my mind something that would look like a musical. In the midst of the narrative telling us the Christmas story leading up to the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, we find two songs, sung out of pure exaltation because of the good news that was shared. These passages read like OT testament prophecies, and since that's where we've been for the last year, building anticipation for the coming of the Messiah, I figured this was a good place to go in this advent season as we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of our savior.

First, chronologically, in a passage we're going to look at next week, Mary burst out in a song about her unborn son after be visited by angel and visiting her relative Elizabeth. Today's passage is no different. Here we find Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist and, he too, suddenly breaks out into song because of the glorious message that is given to him.

Now for context, Luke 1:5-25 tells the story of Zechariah who was a priest and was married to the same Elizabeth mentioned earlier and who was the relative that Mary visited. Zechariah and Elizabeth were both very old and had no children. And we find out that Zechariah was chosen to enter into the Most Holy Place in the temple to burn incense on the Altar of Incense, which was a once in a lifetime event. And while he was praying for his nation and its people, God sent the angel Gabriel to give him a message. This being the first time that God has spoken in 400 years since the days of Malachi.

The message that Gabriel brought was good news, that Elizabeth would become pregnant. But Zechariah was very skeptical and didn't believe what the angel told him. And because Zechariah didn't believe Gabriel, he was told that would not be able to speak until the baby was born.

When Zechariah came out of the Most Holy Place, sure enough, he couldn't speak, and he went home. And just like the angel promised, His wife became pregnant and some time later her relative Mary, the mother of Jesus, came to visit with extraordinary news of her own. Mary stayed for a few months and then she went home which we read about in Luke 1:39-45.

Not long after that, Elizabeth gave birth to her child, a son. As was the custom, eight days after his birth, the boy was circumcised and that is when the boy was to be named. The people thought the boy should be named Zechariah after his father, but Elizabeth said

no and wanted to name him John, the name the angel had said to give him. The people were confused.

John was not a family name, and so they asked Zechariah, who still couldn't speak, and he wrote on a tablet that the boy's name was to be John. With that, Zechariah's mouth was opened and he began to praise God which caused the people around him to wonder what the boy was going to be. "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." (Luke 1:66)

And just like in a musical Zechariah's mouth overflows with a song. I doubt anybody else joined in and started dancing, but maybe. The Bible does say that Zechariah was prophesying. So not only was Zechariah singing, but he was speaking of things that were to come. And so let's take a look at what God has to say to us through the words of this song of Zechariah. If you are able, please stand in honor of God's word as I read Luke 1:67-79. [Read Passage]

His song begins with, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them." This is a song of praise that Zechariah sings. It is full of joy and thankfulness. His son was just born and Zechariah has much to be joyful and thankful about, but notice the first words he began to sing were not about his son, but about God. He was thankful that God has come to his people and redeemed them. Where is he getting that from?

You see, when the angel Gabriel came to Zechariah and told him that he was going to have a son, Gabriel also told him that his son would be the one to prepare people for the coming of the Lord. Remember the promised Elijah figure that was promised in Malachi 4, the one who would prepare the way for the Lord? Here we see this prophecy fulfilled in Zechariah's son.

And if his son were now here, then that meant the Lord was not far behind. He may have even heard what Mary said to Elizabeth about the baby in Mary's womb, which we will discuss more next week. Whatever the case, Zechariah knows that the arrival of his son heralds the arrival of someone greater and he is praising God for that. The Savior of the world was almost here.

The next part of Zechariah's song focuses on just how God has come to redeem his people in vs. 69-75. We start out with Zechariah's mention of God raising up a horn of salvation. Again, Zechariah is not talking about his son, but the promised Messiah. You see, horns were considered a sign of strength and power. People would take the horns of animals and turn them into musical horns that would be carried by soldiers in battle. Typically, it was used rally the troops. But it was also a signal of hope in the battle that meant that reinforcements have arrived. [The Lord of the Rings: Two Towers example]

And so, the horn of salvation was a sign of the strength and power of God, but it can also be taken as the sound of reinforcements arriving in the spiritual battle that we all face. And in this case, it wasn't just any reinforcement but the King, himself, who had arrived on the battlefield and would defeat the enemy. And so, it is a horn of triumph that signifies our salvation. When all seems bleak and the darkness seems to be winning, God has raised up a horn of salvation for His people. Like Zechariah, we praise God for this truth!

Zechariah said that the horn of salvation was promised by the prophets to come from the house of David in vs. 69. David, as you might remember, was the greatest king of Israel. He wasn't perfect, but he was "a man after God's own heart," meaning he sought after God. Because of his heart, God made a covenant promise and told David that the future eternal king would come from his line and this eternal king would be the Messiah, God's Anointed One, the savior of his people. So, these events that Zechariah was experiencing weren't just some random acts, but God told his people about them nearly a thousand years before they happened. There was a plan behind it all, the perfect promise-plan of God.

And what God was going to do was bring about the salvation of his people and Zechariah sings of salvation from his enemies in vs. 71-75. When we read this, it feels like Zechariah is referring to other people as the enemies of Israel. And it is true that many Jews of the time thought that the Messiah would come and conquer the physical world and establish an earthly kingdom. Judea was under the rule of the Romans and the Jews faced a lot of oppression. They thought that the King who was to come would overthrow the Romans and make Israel the dominant power in the world once again just like his father David, but that is not what the real enemy was.

You see, the real enemy that is symbolized here is sin and its wages, death, "For the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23) meaning, the end result of sin is inevitably death. Humanity's collective sin had poisoned the world. God's perfect world was corrupted in the garden and death and disease came with it. Death is the real enemy that Jesus came to save us from. Not physical death itself, for we all die. But the power of death. The Messiah would come to give us salvation from the power of death itself. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Zechariah continues in his song and he finally mentions his own son in vs. 76-79. Zechariah calls his son a prophet of the Most High who will go before the Lord to prepare the way for him. That is very similar to what the angel Gabriel told Zechariah about John. Zechariah had finally believed what the angel said, but he also adds something new about his son's mission on this earth.

Zechariah says that John would give the people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. John's message was one of repentance. In that sense, he made people's heart ready to accept Jesus as their Lord and, when it was time, John pointed the people immediately to Jesus. His mission was to point people to Jesus by revealing their sin and showing them their need for a savior.

We, as a human race, are sinners who, as the Bible says, "invent new ways of doing evil." (Rom. 1:30) Sin lives within us and it is that very sin that collectively and individually has corrupted this world. Every evil thing that happens in this world is the result of our sin. Like a pig in the mud, we keep rolling around in our sin, getting dirtier and dirtier and we have no way out.

We become defiant and even fool ourselves into thinking that rolling around in the mud is better than being clean. We don't see the problem, but John came with a message to show the people that we have a sin problem. And the only solution to that problem is the Messiah, Jesus. The baby in Mary's womb would be the one to cleanse us, to purify us, and to redeem and reconcile us to a Holy God. Praise be His name!

The wonderful thing is that in all the repeated failures of His people, God never gave up on them, but he was faithful to His covenant and had mercy. Zechariah sang, “because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” (78-79)

He calls it “the tender mercy of God.” God doesn’t condemn his children or write us off as a lost cause, but he has mercy upon us and is patient with us. Aren’t you glad for the patient and long suffering nature of God?

We live in a sinful world, and thus, we live in dark times. Mired by sin, the world wants to tear itself apart. It is no wonder that so many are filled with anxiety, uncertainty and hopelessness. We look out at the world and see no end in sight.

But there is a saying, attributed to the 17th century theologian Thomas Fuller, that says that “the night is always darkest before the dawn.” Brothers and sisters, the sun will rise on a new day to bring light into the darkness and drive it all away. It's already happened once at the first advent of Christ and it will happen again at the second coming of Jesus when fear and anxiety will give way to hope and joy.

Zechariah lived in a dark times. God hadn't spoken through His prophets for 400 years but he saw Jesus as the light, a rising sun of righteousness from heaven to shine on those living in darkness. No matter how dark it had been, there is a new day dawning, a new and glorious morn was on the horizon and had now come.

And that is the hope of Christmas. For us, Jesus has already been born into this world. He already died to pay the just penalty for our sins, but there is still hope in what is to come. A new day when Jesus, our King, returns and establishes his kingdom, one where heaven and earth are made new once again. Pain, death and darkness will be no more. There will be no more tears and no more anxiety and dread. The burdens of our hearts will be fully lifted, and we will have eternal peace with God.

What does it mean to have peace with God? First, we must recognize that in our natural state we are enemies of God. And our rebellious nature sets us at odds with our perfect Creator. His just nature cannot overlook our sin and His justice demands punishment.

And secondly, we cannot create peace with God because our best efforts on our best day are nothing but filthy rags compared to His holiness. So, in our sinful state, we cannot be reconciled, we cannot have peace with God, no matter how hard we try.

But here's the beauty of the gospel. God took the initiative in pursuing peace with us by sending His Son to earth. And that's why we celebrate Christmas. Jesus was born and lived a perfect life, His death paid for the sins of all who would trust in Him, and His resurrection guarantees our justification before God. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and He is the One who gives us peace with God. That’s why the message of salvation in Christ is called the “gospel of peace.”

We were created to live in peace with God. Sin destroyed that peace and still destroys it for everyone who refuses Jesus’ offer of salvation. However, anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, believes in his heart that Jesus is the only way to God, and is willing to surrender to Him as Savior and Lord can have peace with God.

You know, the worries of the world can fill us with fear and the danger is that we give in and we lose the thrill of hope in the true message of Christmas spoken of in the great Christmas hymn, "O Holy Night." We can become burdened by life and that can really trample out the song in our hearts. But, let us look to this new and glorious morn, when the sun rises on a new day. The darkness will finally be driven away. There will be no more tears, no more pain, no more suffering. The anxiety in our hearts will be finally laid to rest. The dread of this world will subside and hope, peace, joy and love will reign forever. On that day, we won't be able to stop singing the praises of the one who came to save us from our sins.

Zechariah saw it and broke out in song. We too, can have our eyes opened to the rising sun. We can see the new day dawning, filled with hope of what's to come because God is faithful to His promises, namely, by sending us the gift of His son who brings us peace with God. Let's pray.