

Preaching Christ...
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Date: 10th March 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewantin and Peregian (all via video)
Series: Luke: you can be certain
Title: ... that God's eternal promises were being fulfilled (Part 11)
Passage: Luke 1:57-80
Outline: **The scene**
 The discussion
 The decision
 The question
 The song
 The salvation
 The knowledge

INTRODUCTION

- Someone kindly wrote to me last week to thank me for the Luke series and the **detail** in which we were looking at these familiar passages...
- I **so** appreciated someone doing that... as I myself have **loved** slowing down and taking a longer look at these passages which are often only read at Christmas and kind of glossed over....
- ...and besides that when we **do** look at them at Christmas we're often quite distracted by all the arrangements of quite a **secular** celebration of Christmas, that we don't have the head space to take in all that is happening here... /
- Our passage today on one level starts with a very common **scene**...
- ...having grandchildren in the last couple of years has reminded me again just how **special** the birth of a baby is...
- And people get very excited.. often **perfect strangers** come up to **congratulate** you and ask how old the **baby** is...
- ...**relatives** show up with all sorts of help – and often all sorts of **advice** - whether **asked** for or not or **welcomed** or not...
- And in the story we're looking at this morning – I think it would have attracted **all** that kind of attention... and **MORE** because of the age and stage of Zechariah and Elizabeth... - well past the years when anyone would have expected to produce a child... the most unlikely couple in the **neighbourhood** to become **parents**...
- In addition, everyone knew that since the pregnancy was announced... Zechariah had been **unable** to **speak**. /
- His **unbelief** had been rewarded with **dumbness**...
- Imagine the talk down at the market place... "have you seen Zechariah lately"?
- "Is he still unable to talk...?" "Is he still writing on his tablet?"
- "Maybe he'll get his voice back when the baby comes...?"
- "I wonder what the first thing is he'll say?"
- Well - 8 days after the baby was born, Zechariah **did** get his voice back...

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- ..so let's look at some of the detail... two headings:

1. **The scene** - vv57-66
2. **The song** - vv67-80

- So...

1. THE SCENE

The Discussion

- Everyone has an opinion on the name of a baby don't they...?
- And some relatives will have **far** more to say on the subject that they **ever** should - more than is **wise** or **helpful**
- And that's **exactly** what we see here...
- John is 8 days old... time for his circumcision...
- And have a look in **v59** for we read 'and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah'.
- Who is the '**they**'?
- Everyone one **else** - everyone but the **parents**!
- The response from Elizabeth is pretty clear - "**No!** He is to be called **John**". /
- Now you'd think the mother would have the final say... especially in this case because the father can't speak...
- ...but no, the mother's words are not **enough** - v61 - "There is no one among your relatives that has that name"!
- Elizabeth probably wants to slap the person down - "what's it you?!!"
- They turn to the Father and make signs to him - perhaps he was **deaf** as well... they wanted his **input**

The Decision

- He asks for his **writing tablet**... and presumably he'd become good at writing on this and so he doesn't muck around... what does he write?: 'his name is **John**'
- Now everyone watching on is **astonished** - but we -who are reading the account - **we're** not surprised - we **know** that this is the name the angel said... **God commanded** it... so Zechariah doesn't write "his name his **will** be John" - but "it **IS** John" - because **God** named him John - which means / "**Jehovah** is **gracious**"...
- this name... not only tells the story of God's graciousness to **Zechariah** and **Elizabeth**, but it is the story of John's **life** - because John urges people to repentant and points them to **Jesus** the lamb of God by whom they can be forgiven - all **because** God is gracious!
- And the **moment** Zechariah declares his **name**... he **speaks**!
- It's almost as though God could hardly **wait** to remove the **punishment** and **reward** Zechariah's **obedience**!
- And what does he say?

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- If it was **me** – I'd be talking about **myself** – “you have no idea what it's been like to be unable to speak... I don't know what that angel was up to, but goodness gracious – all I said was ‘this was unbelievable..’ and boom // **nothing...**”
- But not **Zechariah** – he opens his mouth and praises God... and now he can **talk** – his heart **overflows** with sincere and enthusiastic **praise!** //
- So let's remind ourselves – Zechariah and Elizabeth have had a **child** even though they were past it; **against** tradition Elizabeth and Zechariah both insist his name is **John**... and then upon Zechariah's declaration of the child's name he **immediately** gets his **voice** back...
- It's no **wonder** everyone is **taking** about this.. v65 – in fact they are not just **talking** about it – they were filled with **awe**... //
- Are **you** filled with awe at this **story**?
- Will you be filled with awe so much so you'll be talking about it at **morning tea** and over the **dinner table** and **through** the **week**?? //
- **Awe** at God who makes the **speaking** person **dumb**... who declares his **plans** in a **name** – “**God is gracious...**” and who makes the **dumb, speak again?** //
- And **awe** at **God** who in accord with prophecy brings a **forerunner** in **John**, to **prepare** the way of the **Saviour** of the **world!!** //

The question

- Do you see the question they are tossing around v66? “**What then** is the child going to **be**?”
- Have you ever held a baby in the first weeks of his or her life and wondered ‘what is to become of you?’ ‘What will do with your life...?’
- That's the question they are asking about John – but all the more so given the extraordinary circumstances surrounding his birth...
- “What then is this child going to be?” Back to that in **second** half of Zechariah's **song**...
- So let's look secondly:

2. THE SONG

- Two parts to the song – **salvation** – then **knowledge** of **salvation**....
- **Salvation**
- Ok – thinking back... how was Elizabeth able to know what was going on for Mary when she turned up to visit? – including that the baby Mary was carrying was her **Lord**?
- Because she was filled with the **Holy Spirit**... her words were **prophetic**..
- And so now here we see in v67 that **Zechariah** was filled with the Holy Spirit and **prophesied**...
- The Lord has now opened Zechariah's mouth – and what does he say?
- He says – “*Benedictus*...” the Latin from which we get our term – the **Benediction** – he sings – “**Blessed**” – “**blessed** be the **Lord** the **God** of **Israel**”.
- He sings God's praise...- v68 – because he has come and **redeemed** his **people**... - **rescued** **them**.

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- To redeem someone is to free them by the **payment** of a **ransom**...
- So in v71 we see that it meant **salvation** from our **enemies**... and from the hand of all who **hate** us...
- Again in v74 – to rescue us from the hand of our **enemies** and to enable us to serve him without **fear**... in **holiness** and **righteousness** before him all our **days**...
- **What** enemies we need to ask?
- Let's be clear here - this is not a **political** statement... he's not talking about God overthrowing the **Roman rulers** back then... Nor is this related to anything to do with the **political nation** and circumstance of **Israel** today!!
- No – this is a **spiritual** reference...
- When you read it in the context...– he goes on to talk about **knowledge** of **salvation** – not through the overthrow of **foreign rulers** – not through the establishment of a **nation state** of **Israel**... but through the **forgiveness** of **sins**...!
- The political situation was **minor** – a **small** thing... compared to the need to be **forgiven**...
- Concern of God throughout all of time is to **redeem** a people for **himself**.
- God's concern is ultimately not with **political** strictures of his people...
- 'Salvation of our enemies' and the 'hands of all who hate us' –
- Nothing to do with Liberal vs labour
- Or republicans vs democrats!!
- Or Capitalists vs communists
- Or East vs west
- Of even Christians vs Muslims...
- No no no... this is about the **antagonism** which is unleashed from **hell** against those who would **name the name of Jesus Christ**
- Ultimately the enemies we have are **not flesh and blood**!
- We wrestle **not** with flesh and blood but **against the powers and authorities in spiritual places**
- In other words the battle is a **cosmic** battle which is **engaged** in at the **cross** of **Jesus**, where **Satan** was **defeated**!
- So whenever the **devil** comes to tell us about our **past**, we should just tell **him** about his **future**
- **This** is the salvation Zechariah is **singing about**!!
- This means brothers and sisters, that we Christians ought not to be looking down all the time like the **pessimist** or **around** like the **fearful**... //
- Don't let the **newspapers** or TV news or **social media** determine your **outlook** or your **moods**...
- No – we need to be looking **up**... because God has **rescued** us so that we might **serve him**...
- We are not to wallow about in self-pity about our **sin** or our **circumstance**...

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- Because we have been **redeemed!** // We won't hear better news... // what shall separate us from the love of Christ? **Nothing....! Ever!** /
- Don't let anyone tell you that you're **good** for **nothing**... or that what you're doing is not really all that good... because in **Christ** – your deepest most significant need has **already been met**... and all your days are marked with the **deepest significance** – because you've been rescued so you can serve **Jesus in holiness and righteousness** all your **days!** //
- God has **rescued** you... **saved** you... so that you will **serve** him // without **fear**...
- **Is that** is what **your** life is all **about**...!? /
- **Because I have to tell you** – this is why you are **significant... precious... valued... //**

knowledge

- do you remember the **question** everyone was asking? *“What then is this child going to be?”*
- Zechariah now **answers** that question... he is holding his precious son in his arms as many fathers had done before – as many dads here have done and he's looking down with love and he declares... v76 *And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him..*
- Zechariah understands that the one in his arms was fulfilling the prophecy which we read in the last book of the OT – Malachi 3 – *I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me...*
- And through the intertestamental period – mothers and fathers who grew up reading the OT and those who were devout and living with expectation would have said “I wonder when the Messiah will come?” and someone who knew their OT well might have said – “well a messenger will come first!”
- And now under the guidance of the HS, Zechariah takes the baby in his arms and says, **‘you** are he’.
- He's not saying – “wouldn't it be nice if this happens” – or – “gee – I hope it's true” – he says it as a straightforward statement of reality...
- And **how** will he prepare people...?
- he's going to give people **knowledge** of **salvation** through the **forgiveness** of their **sins**...
- he did that, as we will read in a few weeks, by preaching **repentance**...
- he calls **sinners** to **repentance**... a complete **turnaround** in their **lives**...
- for when people **repent** – their **sin** is **forgiven** – and they are **saved** – **rescued**..!
- the one preparing the way for a **dignitary** – prepares the way by ensuring a smooth path without **obstacles**... that was their **job**
- and that is what this little baby Zechariah is holding in his arms will do...
- removing the obstacles of **pride** which cannot see sin, and hardness of heart which doesn't want to **listen** – and **idolatry** whereby people are busy serving **themselves** as god or some **other** god...
- John was to tell people – look the most serious predicament you face is your **alienation** from **God**.. the fact that you are **corrupt** in your **rebellion** against **God**...
- And if you **get** that, **acknowledge** that... **confess** that... **repent** from that... **free and full**

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forgiveness – pardon – and salvation are yours!

- Now it's true today isn't it that people have **no** understanding of sin – and therefore no **notion** that they need **rescuing** from sin's grip and sin's destiny!
- And what John will do – is not just give an **academic knowledge** – but that knowledge which is **personal experience**...
- In other words you can read loads of books on **marriage**.. but until you're **married** you have no **knowledge** of marriage... no **experience** of marriage...
- And what John will do – is lead people into real **repentance** so they **know** the **joy and relief of forgiveness** and the **blessing and joy of salvation**...!
- ... and there are many here this morning who have **THAT** sort of **knowledge**... that **joy** – that **wonder** – that **awe** that God would have such **mercy on us**... because you've **repented**... and **turned to God**... /
- There may be **others** here this morning.. who know a lot up **here**... but don't know it **here**...
- ...and it may be because you've never really let go of **running** your life **yourself**... and therefore know **ABOUT** forgiveness... but have no personal **experience** of **forgiveness**...
- Don't go another **day** like that... //
- But come this very morning... in **repentance** – with **humility** – with **reality** – and say – Lord – I'm so **sorry** – I've been in **charge** and doing my own **thing** for **years**...!
- That's **over** now – I **turn** and put you in **charge**... and on the **basis** of your **promises** – I trust Jesus **died** for me and I long to know the **joy of forgiveness**...
- And if **that** is what you do this morning – you can be sure that your sins will be removed as far as the **east** is from the **west** – and thrown into the depths of the **deepest ocean**... and you will know **forgiveness**! //
- ...all because of the **tender mercy** of our **God**... //
- The song finishes with the reminder that in the mercy of God... a light rises... *to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the path of peace*
- Oh friends – isn't this what our world needs now – more than anything **else**...?
- These past two weeks have reminded us of the **darkness** of our **world**...
- And we see in the **west** – a deep **weariness** and **pessimism** about the **world**... about **politics**... here – **USA** – **UK**...
- We see a deep **hurt** and **brokenness** about the **church**...
- **massive** confusion and much **pain** about **human sexuality** and **issues** around **gender**...
- people who see no **hope** and no **future**... **teens** and **young adults** taking their lives at **unprecedented rates**...
- People fed up with **family**, with **work**... no **mentors** no **role models**... sitting in **darkness** and the **shadow of death**... //
- What's the **answer**? Not some new **political initiative** that's for sure...
- The answer is not more **education**... don't believe that... the answer is not in **anything** we can come up with...

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- No – the **only** answer is the **power** of the **message** of which John the Baptist was the **forerunner**...
- ..that for people walking in **darkness** and in the shadow of **death**... a **light** has come...
- For people who sing 'my past depresses me, my present bores me, and my future scares me to death'...
- ... a **light** has **come**... //
- Some here this morning need to come to that **light** for the **first** time...
- And the rest of us... need to **revel** in the light... **live** in the **light**... and **reflect** the light to **others**...!

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- *Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them*
 - ...join with Zechariah's song... this morning...
 - and sing of God's **salvation**... which comes through **forgiveness**... because his tender **mercy**...
 - and to people living in **darkness** and the shadow of **death today** - **show** them to the **light** - **lead** them to Jesus - to the way of **peace**...