

## Advent Songs

### Zechariah's Song

*Behold The Lamb of God*

*Scripture Reading & Candle: Matt and Meredith Marsh - PRAY*

#### **5MIN**

- Christmas is about enemies! The Christmas season is about conflict!

- "You've never been to my family gatherings. How do you know my family tree like that?"

- Statements like that hit our ears in the wrong way. Words like 'enemy' and 'Christmas' aren't supposed to show up in the same sentence.

- Many of the songs and movies and sentiments of the Christmas season tell us that Christmas is about the *opposite* of enemies – it's about glad tidings and peace and being nice. To bring up conflict threatens to pollute Christmas!

- But, you and I can't understand what Christmas is truly about if we don't see how it's connected to conflict. We will miss the real joy the story of Christmas announces to us if we don't see how it's connected to our enemies.

- Throughout this Advent season, we are looking at 4 songs that animate the Christmas story in Luke 1-2. They are 4 songs sung by 4 different characters before and after the arrival of Jesus in Bethlehem.

- These 3 songs are impactful for us today because they teach us why Jesus came.

- The more we understand the purpose of Jesus' life on earth, the more we understand the purpose of our lives on earth.

- Last wk: Mary – Jesus came to save the empty and scatter the full.

- Today: Zechariah's Song – **Jesus came to rescue us from our enemies.** – not a new or remarkable statement to many of you, but there's a lot more for us to think about than you may see at first.

- *Move through Zechariah's song seeing 3 truths about this rescue*

## 6MIN

### A POWERFUL RESCUE

- Start in **Luke 1:67** – ‘saying’ – the fact that Zechariah was saying anything out loud was pretty amazing at this point in his life.

- Zechariah was unable to talk for the whole 9 months of his wife’s pregnancy; when the angel, Gabriel, told him that he and his wife, Elizabeth, were going to have a baby, he responded with doubt, “How is this possible? We are both old, unable to have a child.”

- Gabriel makes him silent until baby is born. Listening only. Then...**Luke 1:57-64**

- As Zechariah sees the truth of God’s promises come to life right before his eyes, he responds in worship. Zechariah was a priest, steeped in the OT, song full of OT phrases – **Luke 1:68**

- 2 key words: visited and redeemed and horn

- ‘Visited’ – a word that shows up multiple times in the OT when God responds to the needs of His people with His grace; exodus – God saw their affliction and visited His people, Naomi – famine and heard the Lord had visited His people

- ‘Redeemed’ – to redeem is to pay a price to set someone free, to rescue from bondage; another exodus connection, *the* salvation story of the OT, God redeemed Israel out of Egypt

- Zech has had 9 months of silence to consider the words the angel spoke to him and the conversation between Mary and Elizabeth, and how all that connects to what he knows of God’s plans and promises

- He connects the dots and realizes God is redeeming His people *all over again*

- Sees the seeds of God’s ancient promises starting to pop out of the soil, and he says what God is doing now is like what He did back then

- Adds to this, **Luke 1:69** – horn of salvation – the horns of an ox/bull are the symbols of its power/strength; saying God has sent a strong Savior, a powerful Rescuer

- Not talking about his son but Mary’s son! Knows his son, John, is the forerunner/messenger

- What will this powerful rescue accomplish? **Luke 1:71** – may want to skip over this part because we feel like we don’t have enemies or not a lot of people who hate us

- Bad idea because this verse takes us to the heart of what Christmas is about

- The enemies Zech refers to have been the main enemies for every person who has ever lived

- One is our great enemy who is a liar, who loves to steal/kill/destroy, who ruins lives with sin and sickness and bitterness and death – Satan, the devil, the deceiver

- Even closer enemy than the devil; inside everyone of us is an enemy that spoils our hearts, called sin ('the flesh'), fight against our souls and pulls us away from the Lord
- Sin is not just a bad habit or a bad decision – it is our deepest and greatest problem; no amount of social change or political reform can get rid of it
  - Important for us to consider because who you think the enemy is determines who you think the Savior is; because sin is the enemy, only Jesus can be the Savior...*felt in unique way now*
- Begg: The blues that come after Christmas as we get beyond the busyness and distraction of the festivities and think deep down, "I don't have the answer. There's not a gift I could buy or a gift I can receive that seems to satisfy. There's not a vacation I can enjoy, there's not a book I could read, or a piece of music I could listen to that will actually fill the hole." When we feel this, we are really saying, "God, please take the space between us, and fill it up some way." We are asking God to redeem us from the sin we have chosen, from the slavery we cannot escape, and the debt we cannot repay.
- Understanding why Christmas is such good news starts with understanding our greatest problem, our greatest enemy – then we can start to see why Jesus' arrival launched a powerful rescue

## 6MIN

### A PROMISED RESCUE

- See this show up in **Luke 1:72-73**; same theme showed up earlier: **Luke 1:70**
- This brings us to one of the driving forces that's been at work in Zech's heart over the past 9 months that's led to this Holy Spirit-led moment of worship
  - God's promises have come true! (*Mary celebrated the same thing in her song*)
- It's difficult for us to completely relate to what it would have been like to experience this, but let's try to put ourselves in their shoes.
  - Imagine you lived your entire life hearing that God promised one day He was going to rescue His people (year after year), and your parents, grandparents, great-great grandparents
  - All these generations of people have always known the promise but never saw the fulfillment, but now after thousands of years, this promise that has only ever been heard or read or talked about can now be seen! God's promised mercy has come to life, taken on flesh!
- This is what Zech is describing when he says that God has **(1:72b)** "remembered his holy covenant"
  - God remembering His promised doesn't mean He simply brings it up in his mind; it means He is actively bringing about what He said He would do

- It's not as if God had forgotten about the promises He made in the OT, then all the sudden remembered them and scrambled to do something (~~6<sup>th</sup> grade science: 'buffaloes are furry')~~)
- God remembered means God is acting; He is on the move.
- Darling: It is not a coincidence that the first words from God to His people in 400 years would come to [Zech] whose name means 'the LORD has remembered'.
- Zech mentions David (1:69) and Abraham (1:73); God guaranteed to them that one day He would rescue His people from their enemies
  - Throughout the OT, you see many stories of all these little rescues that took place, and they were all previews of the greater rescue God was working to bring about
  - What God was doing in Abraham's life wasn't just about Abraham's life, David
  - (Seeds!) "The Bible is one book with one author and one main subject"
  - Like the boosters on a rocket launch; serve their purpose then fall away...everything God does in the OT, He does to move the story forward to the time we're seeing in Luke 1-2.
- In first part of Zech's song = all past tense – as good as done (confidence in God's promise)
- Ash: Christmas had to happen because God had promised that it would; *powerful promises now...*

## **6MIN**

### **A PROCLAIMED RESCUE**

- At the end of the song, Zech talks about his 1-week-old son, John, and he describes John in light of who Jesus is: **Luke 1:76**
  - Notice how Zech describes his son – 'will be called prophet of the Most High'
  - The most important thing about John is not that he's Zech's son or a priest's son related to Mary or a prophet; the most important thing is that He is the prophet of the Most High
  - Even as you continue reading Luke's Gospel or one of the other gospels, you don't learn much more about John other than the fact that he is the one God set apart as Jesus' opener.
- His sole job is to prepare the way for Jesus by preaching the good news of what God is doing: **1:77**
  - The most important thing about John is how he points to Jesus

- A number of years after this, when Jesus and John were both in their 30s, Jesus says something really interesting about John – Matthew 11:11a, “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women *there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.*”

- Jesus himself says that John was greater than Abraham or David or Isaiah or Solomon, because even though all of them pointed to Jesus in some way, only John was given the job of pointing to Jesus and saying, “That’s the One! There’s the Savior! It’s the Promised One! So, turn from your sin and believe the gospel.”

- There’s another part to what Jesus says in Matthew 11, Matthew 11:11, “...Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is *greater than he.*”

- Jesus is saying that if you’re a follower of Christ, trusted Him, then *you* are greater than John the Baptist.

- Not in every way, but a very specific way – John the Baptist was greater because his ability to point to Jesus, and believers today are even greater than that because of our ability to point to Jesus. There’s a sense in which we can say more about Jesus than John could – see even more connected dots than Zech – death, resurrection, Holy Spirit, whole Bible.

- This means that greatness is not about how we look or how much money we have or how old we are or what talents we have or where we’re from – greatness in the kingdom of God is about the privilege of pointing to Jesus

- Carson: Human beings find their greatest importance in pointing to Jesus.

- Connect 3rd point to 1st point - who God was and who he is and will be, the promise-keeping God who powerfully rescues His people from their enemies is still doing the same work today

- Why I’m excited about what God is doing in and through our church right now and excited for what He’s going to do as we step into 2024 – what He did is what He is doing is what He will do

## **2MIN**

- Xmas not so much about enemies but rescue!

- Zechariah’s song is not about how people rescue themselves; it’s a song about God’s great mercy stepping in to rescue us from our enemies and sending us out to proclaim this rescue to a world held under the power of the same enemies

- Reflection: 1) How does Zechariah’s song encourage you to live in light of God’s promises? 2) Praise the Lord for His tender mercy!

*King of Kings + Sending: Rick (Gather and Go)*

*CUT OUT:*

- In what ways do you feel the oppression of the world the flesh and the devil today how does it most hurt in what ways can you feel dark hostility

- **Luke 1:74-75** – the fruit of the promise – saved to serve

- The effect of this would not only be deliverance from enemies but also the enablement to serve. Christ liberates us so we can serve!

- Romans 12:1, 2 Cor. 5

- Joyful service is a hallmark of those who have received God's mercy. Christianity not only delivers us, but infuses our lives with purpose.

- But what can shine a true light upon us who dwell in the shadow of death? The comfort of fantasy may dull the pain for an evening, but it can give no lasting light period to feel the true light we need to grasp the true problem and the heart of our pain is not death but sin. Once we grasp that and only when we grasp that there can be hope

- When you feel the shadow of death cast its dark gloom over your life know for sure that the light has dawned

- For any of us that have experienced the mercy of God through faith in Jesus, we've been rescued from the enemy of sin by Jesus, we have the responsibility and the privilege of stepping into the darkness of a lost world and proclaiming that the Light has come, that the Sun has risen

- Jesus came because you were drowning, pulled down by the weight of your sin and miles from the shore. If you're drowning, it doesn't help you for someone to come along in a boat and say come on now swim a little more chill little harder swim a little better. No you need someone to reach down their hand grab yours and pull you up to safety and take you to the shore. And if you know you were drowning, you don't refuse the person whose hand has offered to you. You grab it and you praise them with gratitude.

- Jesus came at the first Christmas so that by his obedient life and his sin bearing death he might rescue us from all our enemies