

Theme: After a season of silence and deep meditation, Zechariah erupted in a song of praise for God's saving work, which had been prophetically promised, and was now coming to fulfillment with the birth of John who would prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah Who would save God's people.

I. Intro - O Come, O Come Emmanuel

- A. Popular carol with 7 verses! The choir sang 3 today.
- B. We have six on the panels on the stage - all from Isaiah
- C. Zechariah's Benedictus is a master song of Old Testament praise and promises!

II. The Setting: A Season of Silence

- A. Gabriel's visit with Zechariah (Luke 1:5-25)
 - 1. Gabriel told Zechariah Elizabeth would conceive a son and they should name him John.
 - 2. Gabriel said the child would be the forerunner to Messiah, fulfilling Malachi 4:5-6
 - 3. Zechariah doubted this word (Luke 1:18)
 - 4. Gabriel sentences Zechariah to silence
The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." Lk 1:19-20
 - 5. Everything happened as Gabriel said!
- B. Zechariah's season of silence and meditation
Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God... ⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: Luke 1:64, 67

- 1. After 9 long months of silence Zechariah can speak!
- 2. Zechariah has not wasted this time of silence!
 - a. The work of discipline has had its effect on him!
 - b. He obeys the command to name the child John.
 - c. His mouth is not filled with doubt but rather praise!
 - d. He has clearly meditated on the angel's words for his song is full of insight into Scripture and what God is doing!
 - e. He is filled with the Holy Spirit!
- 3. Praise flowing from meditation
Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel... Luke 1:68
Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel Psalm 41:13 (also 72:18; 89:52; 106:48)
 - a. Zechariah's song begins with this phrase
 - b. It ends the first 4 of the 5 books within the Psalms!
 - c. The book of Psalms begins with a call to meditate on God's Word day and night, and then gives words of praise for every season of life!
 - d. Each book within Psalms ends with this phrase - it is the result of meditating on God's Word and work!
 - e. Zechariah has used his period of silence for deep meditation and personal praise - and he now bursts forth in prophetic praise to the Lord!
- 4. We often may find ourselves in times of discipline or difficulty - these should be viewed as times of meditation and preparation!
- 5. If we allow God to work in us during these seasons instead of giving in to frustration or despair, we will be filled with the Spirit and ready to praise God and speak His Word forth!

III. Zechariah's Song of Prophetic Praise (Benedictus)

A. Zechariah's song praises God for His salvation!

1. This is the key focus of the song
 - a. redeemed (v68)
 - b. salvation (v68, 71,77)
 - c. mercy, tender mercy of God (v72, 78)
 - d. rescue (v74)
 - e. forgiveness of sins (v77)
 - f. Light on those living in the darkness (v79)
 - g. The path of peace (v80)
2. Zechariah praises God because just as He has saved His people time and again in the past, so He is now working to save His people again - but in a greater way than ever before!
3. Zechariah had doubted God's Word for the present, but after 9 months of silence and meditation on God's Word and past actions, he is filled with faith and praise!

B. Zechariah praises God for His prophetic promises

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. ⁶⁹ He has raised up **a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David** ⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us — ⁷² **to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,** ⁷³ **the oath he swore to our father Abraham:** ⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. Luke 1:68-75

1. This first section looks back to God's prophetic covenant promises in the Old Testament
 2. This is the central message through the Old Covenant prophets - the coming of the Messiah
 3. This was the covenant oath He swore to Abraham (Genesis 12, 15) and renewed with David - the Messiah would come to save the people of God!
 4. Interestingly, Zechariah means The Lord remembers and Elizabeth (also the name of Aaron's wife!) means The Oath of my God! Their very names are the content of this first part of the song!
 5. In these few verses, Zechariah summarizes the Old Covenant promises and faithfulness of the Lord, which are the basis for the fulfillment we see in the New Testament.
 6. No wonder this song is part of the daily worship and prayers in Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran Churches!
- #### C. Zechariah prophetically blesses John the Baptist for his calling as the prophet to prepare the way for Messiah
- 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, ⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, Luke 1:76-77
1. Zechariah finally speaks about his son!
 2. Zechariah prophetically blesses John the Baptist for his calling as the prophet to prepare the way for Messiah
 3. Gabriel had told him the calling of God on John's life

He will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. ¹⁶ Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Luke 1:15-17

- a. Gabriel says John is the forerunner to the Messiah!
- b. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah
- c. Gabriel says John is the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6
- d. Interestingly, Zechariah will turn to Malachi when he prophesies about the Messiah, but here he speaks of John preparing the way for Messiah - which is from Isaiah 40! This is another fruit of his meditation during his time of silence.

4. Zechariah's prophetic blessing reveals John's identity and calling and shapes the rest of his life.
5. NOTE: We should speak such words of blessing over our children, grandchildren, and other young people. We may not have an angelic message or the Old Testament prophecies about them, but we should speak the Scripture prophetically over them to bless them!

D. Zechariah prophesies of the salvation Jesus will bring because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven ⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. Luke 1:78-79

1. Zechariah returns to the main focus - Jesus!

2. Jesus is the rising sun coming from heaven (Malachi 4) to shine on those in darkness.
3. Jesus has come to shine on us so that we do not stumble and perish in the dark, for He will guide our feet into the path of peace - shalom!
4. He is coming in fulfillment of all the covenant promises so that we might live in the full blessings and righteousness of God's covenant - shalom!
5. We are back where we began - praise to God for salvation!

IV. Applying the Word

A. I must always remember that Advent is about salvation!

1. It is easy to get caught in all the modern trappings of Christmas and lose our focus on what it is really about - Jesus has come to save us from our sins!
2. Every one of these songs is relentlessly focused on Jesus and why He has come - to save us!
3. In Jesus, God has come to us (or visited us) - he is God with us!
4. Advent reminds us of that key preposition - 'with'! He is not God against us, He is God with us!
5. All of this is happening because of the tender mercy of God! Rather than reject and destroy us, God has mercy on us as we wander lost and under the cruel dominion of sin and Satan and sends His Son to rescue us!
6. If you have never heard or understood that Jesus did not come to condemn you but to save you - hear the Good News today! Salvation is offered to you!

7. As believers, we must not lose the marvel of this!
How unexpected! How astounding - God has tender mercy for ME! Jesus has come to save ME!
8. This is why I am encouraging us to take time to meditate each day via the devotional. Like Zechariah, if we take time to meditate quietly before the Lord, carefully considering what He has done and is doing, it will cause our mouths to be filled with praise!
9. As we do this, let us be like Zechariah and John - speak of Jesus to others, inviting them to receive the Good News!

B. The Table of Mercy

1. This Table reminds us of the tender mercy of God!
2. Because of God's tender covenant mercy, we are freely invited to come, feast, and receive from God!
3. Come and be strengthened!

Zechariah's Song of Prophetic Praise (Benedictus)

Luke 1:67-79
December 15, 2024
Communion
Romans 15:13

Teaching keywords: Advent and Christmas; biblical characters; meditation and silence; prophecy (Old Testament); salvation and deliverance

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: ⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. ⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David ⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us — ⁷² to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham: ⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. ⁷⁶ 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, ⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven ⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Luke 1:67-79