

Sermon Notes

# WORSHIP SERVICE -

## 12.24.2023

# PEACE FOR THE WEARY

**Luke 1:67-79**

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

for he has visited and redeemed his people

69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us

in the house of his servant David,

70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71 that we should be saved from our enemies

and from the hand of all who hate us;

72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers

and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us

74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,

might serve him without fear,

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people

in the forgiveness of their sins,

78 because of the tender mercy of our God,

whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high

79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

# I. GOD VISITS HIS PEOPLE

- These were dark times in Israel's history. God's chosen found themselves under occupation and oppression by the Roman Empire.
- Luke starts his gospel account, "In the days of Herod, king of Judea..." (Luke 1:5)
- Herod was the puppet ruler Rome had placed in office to keep the Jewish people in line. He was a wicked, cruel, and degenerate person who led people into idol worship.
- Those were the conditions surrounding the time of the coming of Jesus.
- Luke introduces us to a humble, older couple by the name of Zechariah and Elizabeth.
- Zechariah was a priest. Luke writes that they were "both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord." (Luke 1:6)
- While serving in the temple and praying, he receives a visit from an angel of the Lord standing at the right side of the altar of incense.
- This is one of four angelic visits recorded surrounding the time of Christ's birth.
- This is remarkable because God had not spoken directly to His people for over 400 years.
- And just like with the shepherds, the angel tells him not to fear because he's bringing good news.
- And what's the good news? "Your prayer has been heard."
- What was their prayer? For a child.
- They would also have been praying for the coming of the Messiah.
- The angel tells him that the baby that will be born to them is the fulfillment of the very last word God had spoken to his people through the prophet Malachi (Malachi 4:5-6).
- The child that would be born to them was the harbinger of the Messiah.
  
- Zechariah expresses some concerns and doubt and as a consequence, he loses his ability to speak until the child is born.
- God would use this as a sign.
- Elizabeth finally conceived after all of those years of hoping and praying.
- When her baby is born she exclaims, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." (Luke 1:24-25)
- This is such a beautiful part of the Christmas story because it foreshadows everything that Jesus's coming represents and what his salvation brings, the removal of our shame and disgrace.
- Eight days after giving birth, they bring the baby to be circumcised.
- Everyone was expecting that he would be called Zechariah after his father.
- But Elizabeth says he is to be named John. Everyone turns to Zechariah and he asks for a tablet and he writes, "His name is John."
- Suddenly, after nine months, his tongue is loosened, he's filled with the Holy Spirit, and begins to bless God and bursts out in prophetic song.
  
- Our passage has been called by the ancient church The Benedictus.
- This prophetic song contains two parts.
- The first part expresses the longing and hope of the Jewish people.
- The second part of the song is Zechariah prophetically singing to his baby.
- His baby had a very special and important role in God's plan of redemption.

- He would be the last prophet heralding the coming of the Messiah and preparing God's people for his arrival.
- The song proclaims that God is visiting and redeeming his people bringing salvation for them. (2:68-69, 78)

## VISITATION

- The word for "visit" in the context of the prophetic literature means that God visitation is for the purpose of rendering aid.
- God has seen the distress of his people and is moved with compassion to act and personally intervene to relieve the misery of his people.
- That's what the birth of Jesus represents, God personally getting involved in rendering aid to his people.
- The angel that appears to Joseph in a dream tells him, "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)
- God's visitation is him coming for a full on rescue and deliverance from our wearying sin-sickness.
- This is what God's people had been waiting for, the time of God's visitation!
- Isaiah 25:9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."
- The glorious visitation of God would bring genuine and true salvation for His people.
- This is why Zechariah sang with such joyful praise!

## II. THE PEACE OFFERING

- 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."
- How does the coming of Christ put us on the path of peace?
- He does that by winning the war that has been raging since the dawn of time.
- He won peace for the weary by becoming our peace offering.
- In the Old Testament, the sacrifice system was set up by God as a means to deal with the sin problem of his people.
- The blood of animals was shed as a continual reminder that the wages of sin is death.
- But the blood of animals is not equal payment for our sin.
- God, in his mercy and grace, could pass over the sins of his people because all of the temple sacrifices were looking forward to the true peace offering that would come at God's appointed time. (Romans 3:23-26)
- Jesus's sacrifice would satisfy God's requirements and make peace with God.
- Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- There is absolutely nothing you or I could do to bridge the hostility in our war with God.
- But God promised that One would come who would bring lasting peace.
- Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to end the war.
- In order to have true and lasting peace, we need to have peace WITH God.
- There is no peace when you are at war with God through sin and rebellion.
- In fact, Christ became our peace offering while we were still enemies of God.
- Romans 5:10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.
- The baby born and lying in a manger came to die as our peace offering.
- We were enemies of God who have been reconciled through Christ's peace offering.
- Ephesians 2:13-17 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.
- We had nothing to offer God so he took the initiative to end the hostility in Christ.
- He was not in the wrong, we were, yet it is God who extends the olive branch of peace by offering up His Son!
- We could not earn that peace.
- We are the passive recipients of the grace and mercy and peace of God.
- And peace cannot be found apart from trusting in his work as our peace-offering.
- All around you are people who lack peace with God!
- You might be lacking inner peace at the moment, maybe there is conflict all around you.
- But if you want the peace that only God can bring, it begins with knowing the One who brings us peace with God.
- When you have peace WITH God you will have the peace OF God.
- The peace Jesus gives is not like the world gives. (John 14:27).
- His peace does not mean the absence of strife, conflict, or trouble.
- His peace is a condition of your permanent relationship with God, you are no longer enemies but his adopted sons and daughters.
- And now you can come to your heavenly Father with your worries and anxious thoughts in prayer, and he gives you peace of mind and heart in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)
- His peace cannot be taken from you because Christ secured it for you with his own blood.
- Do you have peace WITH God?
- The Christmas story is God ending the war and offering us real and lasting peace.
- Take hold of it today!

## **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION**

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?

- With whom can I share the gospel this week?