

BIG IDEA

One of the exciting things about the Christmas season is the vivid reminder that we can trust God's life-giving promises.

INTRODUCTION

On Sunday, Ross introduced a new sermon series that will spend from Advent through Easter looking at the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. What excites you most about this series?

What we learn about Jesus is not something we are supposed to keep to ourselves. Before we begin, who is one person with whom you would like to share what you're learning?

The life of Jesus Christ is one of the most basic ideas of Christianity, but it is a story we can come to again and again to be refreshed, taught, convicted, rebuked, and turned back to the gospel. In Jesus, we find all that we could ever want, and all that we will ever need. Over the next several months, we are going to dive into this story through the eyes of the good doctor Luke, and walk with Jesus from His birth during Christmas to His death, burial, and resurrection at Easter. Through this we will get a clear picture of who Jesus is as well as the radical invitation He offers us.

UNDERSTANDING

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:67.

Who were Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth? What happened to them earlier in this chapter that helps us understand Zacharias's faith journey that culminates in this passage?

Compare and contrast the response of Zacharias and Elizabeth to the message that they received from the angel.

Elizabeth was the cousin of Mary, mother of Christ. She was married to a man named Zacharias, and both were from priestly families. An angel appeared to Zacharias and told him that he and his wife, who were well beyond their child bearing years, would have a son named John who would prepare the way for the Lord. Zacharias asked for a sign while Elizabeth trusted in faith. In response to his doubts, the angel silenced Zacharias until the verses that immediately proceed today's passage. God moved Zacharias from a place of mistrust to trust. As God allowed Zacharias to regain his speech, he lifted up a song of praise to God for His faithfulness. His song shows us why we can trust all of God's promises.

When have you had to work through mistrust to trust? What did you learn about God in that experience?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:68-75.

This song has been called the Benedictus because the first word is “blessed.” What is the theme of this song?

What does Zacharias mean when he says, He “has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant?” In what promise was Zacharias rejoicing?

How many times can you recall God delivering Israel from her enemies in the Old Testament? Why are these all reasons that we should trust God? What are all these deliverances meant to teach Israel?

Read Genesis 17:7. How is the birth of Jesus the fulfillment of the covenant that God made to Abraham?

From the time of Genesis 3:15, God promised a deliverer who would crush Satan. God promised Abraham that through his offspring, all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 22:18). This promise went from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and finally to Judah (Gen. 49:10). David came from the line of Judah, and Jesus came from the line of David. That’s a long time to wait for the promise! But God delivered, true to His word, and Zacharias rejoiced in God’s faithfulness. While waiting, God delivered Israel many times, each of these small deliverances were designed to point Israel (and us) to the true and better salvation that is found in Jesus Christ. Zacharias’s song is given in praise to this Redeemer.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:76-80.

What child is Zacharias prophesying about in these verses? How was this child also an example of God’s faithfulness to His word?

How would this promised child prepare the way for the Lord?

Zacharias must have been full of joy on this day, as his own son John was a fulfillment of the promise of God. The Lord said, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:5-6). John the Baptist was the Elijah that God promised to send (Matt. 11:8-10). John’s preaching prepared the people for the coming of Jesus. John preached repentance, and warned them of the wrath of God that was coming upon those who would not love and obey Him.

How did John give the people the knowledge of salvation?

Why do you think that Zacharias described our lives as being lived in darkness and in the shadow of death?

Sin brings death, and because the world is full of sin, the world is full of death. Zacharias's poetic words are true because death hangs over all of us like a shadow. We lose our loved ones to death. The longer we live, the more we see the truth in Zacharias's words. But God promised to end death by ending sin. God's promise was to send a Savior, and God fulfilled that promise in Jesus Christ. Over many generations and hundreds of years, God remembered everything that He had promised, and God demonstrated His trustworthiness when He sent Jesus to save us from our sins.

APPLICATION

What are some areas where you might have difficulty trusting in the Lord? How can you give over your trust to Him, the One who is faithful to His word, this week?

How does God sending Jesus help us see that God can be trusted to keep His word?

Who needs the light of Christ that shines through the darkness that has come to you? How could you use what you are learning about Jesus to tell him/her?

PRAY

Praise God that He is a trustworthy Father. Thank Him that He never goes back on His promises. Ask that He would reveal areas to you where you need to give over trust to Him, then ask for the strength and guidance to do so.

MEMORIZE

And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel. –Luke 1:80

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COMMENTARY

LUKE 1:67-80

1:67-68. Zacharias then was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. Just as his son would later preach the profound message of God, even so Zacharias proclaimed the glory of the Lord, the God of Israel. The priest blessed the Lord for having visited and for having provided redemption for His people. Whereas Mary's song in verses 46-55 likely was patterned after the Psalms, Zacharias's prophecy probably was modeled on Old Testament prophecies and well may have been the last prophecy of the former age and the first of the Messianic age. His prophecy has two parts. Verses 68-75 focus on God's providing salvation in the coming Messiah. Verses 76-79 address John's role and God's great gift. John would be the forerunner of Jesus, the Messiah.

1:69-70. The priest praised Israel's covenant, all-powerful God because in John's birth and Jesus' coming birth, He was visiting His people. In His active care, God was in the process of providing redemption. At cost to Himself, God was making possible liberation for His people. He was offering salvation first to the Jews and then to all people. An animal's horn signified strength. The phrase horn of salvation could mean mighty salvation, strong Savior, or powerful Deliverer. The words refer to the Messiah, who would be in the house (or lineage) of God's servant David. God was fulfilling His promise of a descendant of David whose throne God would establish forever (see 2 Sam. 7:12-13).

1:71-75. In poetic parallelism, Zacharias described the Messiah's work on behalf of God's people. Not only does Jesus redeem us, but He also is able to deliver us from elements in our lives that defeat us. Through dependence on Him, we can be victors instead of victims as we face anything and anyone attempting to overcome us. Zacharias celebrated God's following through on His promises to Israel. In sending the Messiah, God dealt mercifully with Israel's fathers. Not only was He extending mercy to people at the time of the Messiah's coming and through the coming centuries to our time; God also was making good on the promises of His holy covenant. Zacharias had God's covenant with Abraham in mind (see Gen. 22:16-18). God's provision of the Messiah would result in people's being rescued from the clutches ("hand") of their enemies—not the Romans, but the bondage of sin. Deliverance from sin's dominance would free people from fear of judgment and would give them the matchless privilege of serving God. Believers' service involves worshiping God and ministering to people.

1:76-79. Zacharias moved from praising God for His gift of the Messiah to address John, his son and the Messiah's forerunner. John would be God's prophet, telling the good news of the Messiah's arrival. The name Most High for God reflects the Hebrew term that means "the Exalted One." In Luke 1:32, the angel Gabriel announced that Mary's child would be "the Son of the Most High." In contrast, John would be the Most High's spokesman; thus, Jesus would be superior to John. Later, when John began his ministry, he acknowledged Jesus' superiority to him (see John 1:19-30). John's God-assigned task would be to prepare people to experience salvation by means of the forgiveness of their sins. All people were missing God's goal for them. Through Jesus, God would dismiss (send away, wipe off) their sins. John would announce this astonishing good news, call people to repentance as a basis of their forgiveness, and tell them about the coming One.