

This Is Christmas: Hope – Luke 1:67-79

Luke 1. This is the third message in our series *This Is Christmas*, focusing on the things that *make* Christmas, Christmas. A series we're going to finish on Christmas Eve. And having looked at joy and peace the last two weeks, this week is hope. And we need it.

In fact, hope is one of the most vital aspects of our existence. Why do you think “keep hope *alive*” is such a common phrase? Because without it we wilt. Without hope, we quit. Without hope, we die. In life, death, everything.

We *need* the confident expectation that God will do what he says. We need the settled conviction that God is good and does good. We need the blessed assurance that he will save us and *keep* us for good. We need *that* kind of hope. Real hope.

And Christmas offers it. Christmas is where it starts. But first some background. (**Outline**)

➤ Luke's account of Jesus doesn't start with Joseph and Mary, but a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. [Who] *were both righteous before God* [1:6] . . . *but they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.*

But God sent an angel to Zechariah, telling him he's going to have a son, who will prepare the way for the Messiah; the Christ. A son to be called John. And even though Zechariah doesn't believe it, and is rendered mute, unable to speak; Elizabeth gets pregnant.

Then, another angel tells Mary, a *relative* of Elizabeth, that *she's* going to have a baby; the Christ-child himself. So Mary goes to Elizabeth, no doubt to compare notes, and keeps her company for 3 months until John is born; v57. And as soon as Zechariah confirms his name, his tongue is freed and he exclaims a prophecy of hope. Not about his son John the Baptist, but Jesus. *God's Son*. And that's where I'd like to pick it up. V67.

➤ The people were wondering about John, this newborn prophet . . . [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, [v70] 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.* (ESV) Let's stop there.

He's not talking about John, but Jesus. John the *Baptist* doesn't save us, Jesus does. And though the word “hope” isn't found one *time* in this passage, it's written all over it. Because Jesus would go on to be the hope of the *world*. Our Savior.

That's why Christmas and hope are synonymous. Because Christmas celebrates the *coming* of Jesus, and . . .

Jesus saves (v68-71)

Christmas is hope because Jesus saves. V67 again. *Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit [as in compelled and controlled] and prophesied, saying, [68] “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel [praise him], for he has visited and redeemed his people.* As in, paid the price of their release, from the oppression of sin.

That's what it means to be redeemed. Released from the oppression of our sin, through the

payment of a ransom. Which was offered by Jesus some 30 years later on the cross. It's a prophecy of hope, and part of our salvation. Like it says in v69.

*And [God] has raised up a horn of salvation for us [a powerful *means* of saving us; from the *consequences* of our sin; the consequences of death, suffering, and separation from God for all eternity] in the house of his servant David [he would be someone from King David's lineage], [70] as he [God] 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.* Seen and unseen. Physical enemies and spiritual.

Even ourselves. The enemy of our own *flesh*. That wages war on our soul and drags us to the depths of sin; the prison of bondage. We're our own *worst* enemy sometimes.

➤ And Jesus came at Christmas to *save* us. Personally, thoroughly, powerfully, faithfully, and triumphantly. They're all here. Starting with personally.

Jesus saves **personally**. Because *he has visited* . . . *his people* it says in v68. God took on flesh and came to us. Personally. And still does. In our heart. When we believe in who Jesus is and what he did, and repent of our sin, he takes up residence. Personally.

Second, Jesus saves **thoroughly**. Rescuing us, *redeeming* us, restoring us, and changing us. When Jesus saves, he saves to the *utmost* the Bible says. (Heb 7:25) Thoroughly.

Third, he saves **powerfully**. He's a *horn of salvation*, v69. So powerful that he gives life to the dead. Even to the *worst* of sinners. Which means nobody is *beyond* saving. Nobody. You're not too sinful, too bad, or too far gone. If Jesus overcame the sins of the *world* on the cross, he can certainly overcome yours.

4th, he saves **faithfully**. Just like God said. *As he spoke [v70] by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.* God said that his coming Messiah would save, and he does. Faithfully. Whoever *calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*. (Rom 10:13)

And last, Jesus saves **triumphantly**. V71 – [God] *has raised up a horn of salvation for us . . . that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.* That's triumphant. And that's hope.

And if you haven't experienced it, if Jesus hasn't saved you, I'm going to give you an opportunity to pray with me at the end of this message. An opportunity to admit your need, express your belief, repent of your sin, and receive him into your life. Don't miss that. And don't miss out. Jesus saves.

Second, Christmas and hope are synonymous because . . .

Jesus assures (v72-75)

He *assures* us of our salvation. He *confirms* his goodness and grace. He removes all *doubt* about our redemption and life. 5 ways. First . . .

• By showing us mercy (72a)

Jesus assures us by showing us mercy. V72. [God] *raised up a horn of salvation . . . to show the mercy promised to our fathers.* The compassion. The steadfast loving-kindness. He promised it, and shows it. Withholding the *punishment* we deserve, the moment we're

saved. The moment we're *in Christ*; in a *relationship* with him. He shows us mercy.

Second, Jesus assures us . . .

• **By keeping God's promises (72b-73)**

[God] *raised up a horn of salvation* [v72b] . . . *to remember his holy covenant, [73] the oath that he swore to our father Abraham*. The promise he made to bless all the nations of the earth *through* Abraham; Genesis 12. And sure enough, God did it. He raised up a Savior from Abraham's lineage, to *bless* us, by saving us from our sins. Promise kept.

Third, Jesus assures us . . .

• **By delivering us from evil (74a)**

V74. [God] *raised up a horn of salvation . . . to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear*. Jesus assures us of our salvation by delivering us from the evil hand of our enemies. Just like he taught us to pray. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. (Mt 6:13)

4th, he assures us . . .

• **By giving us confidence (74b)**

Confidence to *serve him without fear* it says. Without fear that he will *withdraw* our salvation. Without fear that he will crush us, or consume us. Without fear that our service isn't good enough. Jesus has appeased God's wrath for good. Which means we can serve him confidently. Enter his presence boldly.

And last, he assures us . . .

• **By declaring us righteous (75)**

[God] *raised up a horn of salvation . . . that we . . . might serve him without fear* [v75], *in holiness and righteousness before him all our days*. When Jesus saves us, he declares us righteous; once and for all. Enabling us to live *Coram Deo*, before God; in his presence. Not for a moment, or a day; but *all* our days.

Talk about assurance. Talk about hope. That's it. (**Summary**) *5 gifts*, that started at Christmas. And you can have them. Because Jesus is *still* showing mercy, *still* keeping promises, *still* declaring people righteous. But you have to believe. You have to repent.

And when you do . . .

Jesus forgives (v77-78a)

That's the third reason Christmas and hope are synonymous. Jesus forgives. In fact, Jesus saves, *because* he forgives. It's found in v77, right after Zechariah speaks to his newborn son, John the Baptist, in v76.

[76] *And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High* [the representative of Jesus]; *for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways* [to get people ready for his presence and message; which is this], [77] *to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins*.

John's mission in life was to pave the way for the *Gospel*; the good news of Jesus. That through faith and repentance, belief in him and following him, we can be *forgiven* of our sin and saved from the consequences. Or as Zechariah said it, we can have the *knowledge of salvation*; we can experience it. No longer having our sins held against us. They're forgiven.

All *because of the tender mercy of our God*, v78. His loving compassion once again.

Jesus forgives, and you can experience it. All you need to do is *admit* your sin and sinfulness, and repent of it. *Admit* your need for a Savior, and turn to him. From your sin, *your* way of living, to him; and *his* way of living. That's where it starts. Admit, believe, repent, and receive.

Do that, and you'll find that Jesus not only forgives, but revives.

Jesus revives (v78b-79a)

He gives us life and light. That's what Zechariah says in v78-79.

Because of God's tender mercy, *the sunrise shall visit us from on high* [referring to Jesus and the truth he embodies; he's the *sunrise*] [79] *to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*. Light to those in the darkness of sin and guilt; sin and shame; sin and misery. And light to those in the *shadow of death*. Those facing eternal separation from God; *because* of their sin and darkness.

We need light. Son-light; S.O.N. The light of righteousness. The light of life.

And Jesus gives it. He's the sunrise that dawned at Christmas, and the light of the world that dawns in us. Piercing the darkness and reviving our soul. Removing our sin and making us whole. That's the idea of light. It revives us. Encourages us. Lifts us.

➤ When I was a kid, one of my jobs was to take the garbage out and burn it in a big barrel out back. Which wasn't that far from our house, but as a kid, it was Timbuktu. *Way* too far. Made worse by the fact that the barrel was about 3 feet from a barbed wire fence, with corn on the other side. And on the other side of the corn was thick woods.

No big deal in broad daylight. But at night? After supper I lived in *fear* of the words, "Robbie, it's your turn to take the garbage out." So I'd muster all the courage I had, pick up the bag, step outside the door, and immediately start whistling, singing, talking, and running. From the time I left the house to the time I returned. Except when I was standing next to the barrel, next to the fence, next to the corn, trying to get the fire going.

I was scared. Because the darkness and shadows were *death* to a scrawny 8 year-old. And there was nothing like the back-porch *light*, as I ran to house, to revive my soul and give me hope. That little hundred-watt bulb was the closest thing to Jesus I knew.

Christmas is hope because Jesus shines. Jesus revives. Jesus restores. Jesus lifts. Don't miss him. Look to the light and *run*.

And when you do, you'll find that . . .

Jesus guides (v79b)

V79b – He has visited us from on high, *to guide our feet into the way of peace*. The way of *rest* and settled-ness. The way of reconciling with God. The way to *know* him. The way to *live* for him. Jesus guides us to *all* of that. From the moment we're born again, to moment we die; entering his peace once and for all.

➤ Before the days of Garmin's and Google Maps (**Map**), we actually *used* a map; *looked* at it. Remember that? For those of you under 20, maps are big pieces of paper with roads

and cities on them. And most of the time, we'd chart a course, get in the car, get lost, get mad, and then stop to ask for directions.

And if we were lucky, we were halfway close to our destination, and some local-yocal would point us in the right direction. "Go down this here road, and when you see Frank's old car sittin' on blocks in his front yard, take a left. Then go a little ways past the holler, and you'll see the house about a stone's throw back." And all that with a wad of chew in his mouth.*****

➤ Do you know how Jesus guides us? He goes before us with his *life*, he lights the way with his *presence*, marks the path with his *word* (Ps 119:105), and guides our step with his *Spirit*. Saying, "this is the way, walk in it. *Follow* me." (**Summary**).

That's hope. And if you want it, if you need it, pray with me right now. Here or there. Admit, believe, repent, and receive.

Prayer of Salvation. "God, I admit that I'm a sinner and need a Savior. And I believe in Jesus to do it, to save me. So I repent. Please forgive me of my sin and cleanse me. I'm sorry for how I've lived and want to change. Come into my life and lead me, guide me. I receive you now as Savior and Lord. I admit, I believe, I repent, and I receive."

As we continue in prayer, if you just prayed with me to be saved, would you raise your hand and wait for me to acknowledge you? And if you're watching online, would you respond on your screen, or text the word "**Saved**". We just want to rejoice with you and pray for you. Is there anyone?

Closing Prayer – Lord, thank you for saving us, and thank you for hope. May you fill each and every one of us with more and more. Lead us, guide us, assure us, and revive us. And spur us on to know you more. At Christmas and always. In Jesus' name, amen.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Rom 15:13)