

The Song of Zechariah

Advent Midweek #1 – 12/04/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 1:67-80 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 68-70, **“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old...”**

Introduction

✘ Not every song in this world has a tune, is literally set to music, or is even technically a song.

I. The “Song” of Living for Yourself

✘ For example, there is a song that parents like to teach their children. It’s a song sung by these parents themselves – if not literally, none the less they sing it loudly and clearly. They sing it, they believe, to prepare their children for life; to teach them how to find happiness.

→ The lyrics vary a bit from parent to parent, but the substance of the song remains the same. It goes like this: “Live for yourself and pursue your own passions, because the primary reason that you, dear child, exist in this world is to build up your own glory; your own reputation; your own wealth and influence. Everyone else – including God – is secondary to you.”

✘ In singing this song then, parents teach their children to be selfish and prideful. They teach their children to believe that what matters most in life is their own specialness; their own success.

→ When parents discover that their children possess certain gifts or talents, rather than teaching them how to use these gifts to help and serve others, they teach them that these things must now become the focus of their entire lives; must be honed to perfection to get ahead of others at all costs. If a star high school quarterback wanted to quit the team to let his backup have a shot, his parents would sing a lament to him, saying, “This is a kind gesture, but you’re not in this life to help or support others. You have your own future to worry about first.”

→ If a high school valedictorian decided to forego college to feed the hungry throughout the world, her parents would very quickly sit her down and sing the same lament: “That’s a nice idea, but feeding the hungry is not going to get you where you need to be. You worry about you before you start worrying about other people and their problems.”

✘ Sadly, we Christians often find ourselves singing this same song to our children; teaching them that Jesus should always be the center of our lives until He gets in the way of something we need to achieve to maximize our glory. Go to church, unless sports or dance or some other event gives you the opportunity to display your talents or earn you some money on Sunday morning. Chase God’s righteousness unless you can enhance your chance of a college scholarship.

→ Talk to people about Jesus; make a bold confession of faith, unless doing so might hinder your reputation or your upward mobility at work. In other words, the name of the tune we sing is this: “Believe what the Bible says, within reason.” But don’t actually give away everything you have to follow Jesus. Don’t be so forgiving that people can walk all over you and make you look weak. Don’t sacrifice earthly respectability for eternal righteousness.

✘ These are the songs we sing to our children. And oh, how proud we are when we see and we hear them sing them back to us. Why? because this is what we believe ourselves. Sure, we believe that glorifying God is very important, but it is very much second place to building up our own glory; our own wealth; our own honor and comfort.

II. Zechariah teaches a greater song, the Son of Christ

- ✘ Yet tonight, in Luke chapter one, Zechariah teaches us a much greater song, which is quite amazing when you consider the circumstances of his son, John's birth.
 - Remember, Zechariah finds out about his son's upcoming birth from an angel; an angel who tells him that his aged and barren wife is going to have a son; a miracle reminiscent of Sarah giving birth to Isaac in the Old Testament.
 - And this angel tells Zechariah that his son is going to be a prophet like Elijah. But you see, here's the rub: people haven't seen a prophet in 300 years. And Zechariah should know because he's a priest, serving at that moment in God's Temple when the angel tells him that his son will be a prophet sent to pave the way for the long-promised Messiah, the Savior of the world.
 - To be honest, none of us can fully comprehend what Zechariah was being told, because no matter how great the accomplishments of our own children might be, they are nothing compared to John the Baptizer. Raise your hand, has anyone here had an angel tell you that your child will be the forerunner of the Son of God? No? And yet Zechariah's song to his prophet son was that he – John, must decrease so that Jesus would increase. So, if Zechariah can teach that song to John, you and I should definitely be able to teach the same song to our sons and daughters as well.
- ✘ And that's exactly what Zechariah teaches John. When his son was born, all the people are gathered around Elizabeth and Zechariah trying to figure out God's intent for this miracle baby named John. They want to know: What kind of future does Zechariah have in store for his son?
 - They haven't heard Zechariah speak for nine months because there in the Temple he questioned God's ability to open Elizabeth's womb and the fact that his son would be the prophet to prepare people for the Messiah. And yet, it's at this moment that God restores Zechariah's voice. So, with those freshly opened lips, unlike basically every new father ever, Zechariah does not brag about his newborn son.
 - No, instead he sings the song of Christ:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant” (vv. 68–72).
- ✘ Zechariah teaches all of the people gathered around – expecting to hear a song praising his son's miraculous birth, that there is a far more important song that must take center stage instead. It's the song of the redemption that Jesus is going to win with His blood. Zechariah sings of Jesus as “the horn of salvation” from the house of David; the One who is going to rule from David's throne forever in peace and mercy.
 - Instead of singing the praises of his wife Elizabeth – always a dangerous proposition according to the world's protocols, Zechariah sings a song praising the son of another woman; the Son of Mary. But in this case, Elizabeth is not offended, nor is she jealous, because she knows that her own child is not the most important child nor the greatest nor cutest nor best in the world at anything.
 - How could a new mother and father do something so radical; so “un-American” as to praise someone else's child above their own?

- ✘ Because they acknowledge and believe God and His messengers of truth – that is the prophets of old and the Angel Gabriel. Mary’s Son, not theirs, is the One who is going to deliver His people from their enemies; from sin, death, and the devil.
 - ➔ So Zechariah goes on in verses 76-77 to sing to his son, John, that his job will be to prepare the way for this Savior; that his goal in life will be to get people ready to receive the love of God that someone else – Jesus is going to bring: “You, child,” Zechariah sings, “will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins.”

III. Jesus fulfills the Song of Zechariah

- ✘ So now, because God’s inspired Word came to us in the flesh of Jesus, we know that He has indeed brought us that salvation. Walking the road that John the Baptizer prepared, Jesus reached out to you and me, and grabbed every one of those sins that should have rightly meant our condemnation; all of the pride that has us loving ourselves and our money and our accomplishments instead of loving God and our neighbor first.
 - ➔ Jesus took those sins as the sacrificial Lamb, and He drowned them in His blood. He erased them and forgave them. Walking that path prepared by Zechariah’s son, Jesus led a perfect life, never sinning – not even once, so that when He died and He rose again, He could welcome us now into His kingdom; so that He could bring us by His side as He rules from David’s throne today and forever. Walking that path, Jesus cast out demons and raised the dead all the while leading up to when He crushed the serpent’s head beneath His foot as He hung and died upon the cross.
- ✘ So, where do you and I fit into this song? On that same path, dear Christian, Jesus forgave your sins; triumphed over your enemies, and gave you the gift of everlasting life as well.
 - ➔ So yes, it’s on Jesus’ path that He even takes people who unfaithfully raised our children to be selfish and prideful, and He makes us into faithful parents who look much more like faithful Zechariah.
 - ➔ Even more, on this path prepared by Zechariah’s son, Jesus took people all around the world, from every nation and station in life; people who were sinful, idolatrous children, and He made us into His holy and beloved children of God. From the cross, as He cried out, “It is finished,” Jesus sang for us all the song of pardon and peace; the song of mercy and healing. He sang the only song that could open the doors of heaven to us. And when He rose in victory three days later, those doors flew wide open!

Conclusion

- ✘ So if you want to know true glory, and if you want your children to know it, then teach and sing the song of Christ like Zechariah. If you want to thrive in this life and want your little ones to do the same, go with them to the feet of the One who walked the path prepared by Zechariah’s son.
 - ➔ If you want your children to possess unfathomable treasures, and if you want to enjoy those treasures with them, hear the Song of Zechariah and go where it leads you – to the Lamb of God. Only He is the “horn of salvation” (v.69) for you. Only He has “saved (you) from your enemies” (v.71) so that you too “might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all [your] days” (v.74-75) in His kingdom, full of grace and glory. Amen.