

# Luke 1:57-80

## “The Way of Peace”

February 25, 2024

### 1. Intro

- a. I think its safe to say that we all long for those moments when the noise of all the chaos in the world goes away
  - i. We all love those short and sweet times when the house is quiet, the dogs aren't barking, and our phones aren't going off every five minutes with some new alert
    1. Those moments of peace and quiet can sometimes be hard to come by in our busy lives, but we cherish them when we can get them, don't we?
  - ii. But, just imagine if that silence stretched on for a few days... and then a few weeks... and then even into months
    1. And this silence wasn't just a silence where you couldn't hear any voices or noises around you, but you yourself couldn't even speak
      - a. Imagine how difficult that would be
      - b. Imagine the isolation you would feel
  - iii. Well, this was the world that Zechariah had lived in for nine months
    1. A few weeks ago, when we looked at the angel Gabriel's announcement to Zechariah, we saw how serious Zechariah's sin of unbelief was
      - a. Because he did not believe the word of the Lord, Zechariah was struck both deaf and mute
      - b. Notice back in verse 20 that Gabriel told him that his punishment would last "until these things took place."
        - i. Surely Zechariah began to wonder what that meant
          1. Would his punishment be lifted when he communicated these promises to Elizabeth through sign language, or maybe by writing it down for her to read?
          2. Would his punishment be lifted when the child, John the Baptist was conceived in Elizabeth's womb?
          3. Maybe the punishment would be lifted when young Mary came to visit, and they realized they were in the presence of the Son of the Most High, who was still nine months from being born?
          4. Maybe, as each of these events came and went, Zechariah began to wonder in his heart if he would remain deaf and mute, even as John grew into a man and began his ministry?
      - c. Zechariah was a communicator
        - i. As a priest, it was his job to teach and instruct and counsel
        - ii. But for nine months, this was taken away from him
        - iii. For nine months, he was unable to speak, and he was likely unable to hear as well
          1. This is where we find ourselves at the beginning of our passage for this morning, Luke 1:57-66

### 2. Luke 1:57-66

- a. *<sup>57</sup>Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. <sup>58</sup>And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. <sup>59</sup>And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his*

father, <sup>60</sup>but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." <sup>61</sup>And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." <sup>62</sup>And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. <sup>63</sup>And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. <sup>64</sup>And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. <sup>65</sup>And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, <sup>66</sup>and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

- i. Elizabeth, who had been barren into her old age, now finally held her own baby in her arms
  1. She who had borne the reproach of her family and neighbors for her entire married life, now rejoiced together with them amidst the cries of this little child
- ii. But notice what verse 59 says...
  1. On the EIGHTH day, they came to circumcise the child
    - a. Even after the birth of their son, Zechariah still remained deaf and mute!
    - b. Surely he must have been a mess of emotions during those eight days
      - i. Incredible joy at the miraculous birth of his son, mixed with incredible sorrow at the fact that he could not even hear him cry, nor could he even speak to his precious child
      - ii. We read these stories so many times that we forget that these were real people, living very real lives
        1. What a long eight days that must have been for Zechariah!
- iii. But then, of course, on the eighth day, the punishment is lifted
  1. After the baby was circumcised according to Jewish law, the people in the room wanted to know what his name would be
    - a. They believed the right thing to do would be to name him after his dad, for Zechariah was a righteous man, their priest who was no doubt loved and respected throughout the community
    - b. But Elizabeth insisted, "No, his name will be JOHN!"
      - i. It's funny to me that the people didn't really seem to care what the baby's own mother said about his name
      - ii. They were persistent about what they thought it should be, weren't they?
        1. So they went to Zechariah, making signs to him, asking him what HE wanted to name the child
        2. And when he wrote on the tablet, "His name IS John," Luke tells us that IMMEDIATELY his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed!
          - a. And Zechariah spoke, blessing God!!
          - b. Full of the Holy Spirit, as we'll see in just a moment, Zechariah burst into prophetic singing!
- iv. How incredible this all must have been for old Zechariah!
  1. How amazing must it have been for Elizabeth, who finally had her husband back, whole and healed, singing and blessing the Lord!
    - a. But look at how the neighbors responded
      - i. Luke says that FEAR came upon them, as they wondered who this child might be
        1. This word that Luke uses to describe their fear is the Greek word *phobos*
          - a. Sound familiar? This is where we get our word, "phobia"



1. And how amongst these rulers there was much treachery and deceit and bloodshed
- iii. We talked about how, even though the Temple had been rebuilt, and had been marvelously restored by Herod, the glory of God had not returned
  1. Israel showed all the outward signs of worship to God
  2. But their hearts were far from Him
- b. So when the news came that another prophet was in their midst, they withdrew and hid
  - i. Much like Adam and Eve hid from the Lord after their sin in the Garden
  - ii. Much like we hide from the Lord in our sin
    1. When we fall into sin, what is our initial response?
      - a. Guilt... shame... sorrow
    2. And in our shame, we begin to think thoughts like “How could God ever love ME? How could He ever accept ME, one who is so weak and pathetic?”
    3. And so we withdraw
      - a. We withdraw from reading the Scriptures
      - b. We withdraw from coming to Church
      - c. We withdraw from God
  - iii. We may not acknowledge it in our minds, but in our hearts, we have become FEARFUL of what God would have to say to us
    1. And so, like Zechariah and Elizabeth’s neighbors, we run off and hide, knowing the sin that dwells within us
    2. Like Adam and Eve, we run off and hide, fearing that God will see us in our nakedness and our shame
    3. In our sin, we don’t want to hear the words that God has to say to us
- c. But what we need to see from Zechariah’s song is that, in these moments, the tender mercy of God is seen in the greatest light... IF we will just have the eyes to see it!
  - i. Let’s look at Zechariah’s song together...

### 3. Luke 1:67-79

- a. *<sup>67</sup>And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, <sup>68</sup>“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people <sup>69</sup>and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, <sup>70</sup>as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, <sup>71</sup>that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; <sup>72</sup>to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, <sup>73</sup>the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us <sup>74</sup>that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup>in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. <sup>76</sup>And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, <sup>77</sup>to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, <sup>78</sup>because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit ush from on high <sup>79</sup>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. As we saw last week, Mary’s hymn is called the *Magnificat*, because of her opening line, “My soul magnifies the Lord”
  - ii. Zechariah’s hymn is known by its Latin title, the *Benedictus*, because of his opening line, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel”

1. *Benedictus*, meaning “blessed”
  - a. And in Zechariah’s *Benedictus*, we see two clear parts to this hymn
    - i. Verses 68-75 are Zechariah’s words of blessing directed toward God
    - ii. And verses 76-79 are his words of blessing directed toward his new baby boy, John
4. So first, let’s look at verses 68-75
  - a. Zechariah immediately launches into praising God
    - i. For, with the birth of John, and the fulfillment of the words of Gabriel, God had once again visited His people
      1. The prophet of the Most High had been born
      2. But even more importantly, the SON of the Most High was growing in Mary’s womb
        - a. And, as Matthew told us in his Gospel,
          - i. <sup>22</sup>*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup>“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).*
        - b. God didn’t drop by for a quick visit to His people, only leave again a short while later
          - i. God visited His people, and He has come TO STAY!
    - ii. For in the coming of God in the flesh, through His Son Jesus Christ, God has brought REDEMPTION
      1. He has raised up a horn of salvation for His people in the house of David
      2. Just as God had spoke through the mouths of His holy prophets of old, God was bringing about the mercy He had promised to the fathers of Israel
        - a. He was bringing to fulfillment the holy covenant he had sworn to Abraham
        - b. He was bringing about the deliverance of God’s people from all of their enemies, saving them from the hand of everyone who hated them
    - iii. With the coming of God’s Son, God’s people would now serve the Lord without fear from their enemies, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all our days!
      1. These are incredible promises, aren’t they?
  - b. But there is a problem with these verses, isn’t there?
    - i. God DIDN’T save His people from their enemies, or from the hand of all who hated them
      1. Jesus was born, he lived, he died, and he was resurrected, but Rome still remained in power FOR CENTURIES afterward
      2. Zechariah’s own son, the prophet who would prepare the way for the Lord, would be executed after he had barely turned 30 years old
      3. Even in the world today, Christians die daily for their faith in Jesus Christ, as they are martyred by the hand of all who hate them
      4. How do we answer the question of “Why is there still so much suffering in the world today, especially among the people of God?”
    - ii. The Apostle Peter realized this would be a question that Christians would have to face
      1. Turn with me in your Bibles to his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, as we look at 2 Peter 3
        - a. In verses 3 and 4, Peter says that there will be scoffers who come... men and women who will say to us, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”
          - i. Nothings changed in the world
            1. The world was a mess in the days of the prophets
            2. The world was a mess even in the days of Jesus
            3. The world is a mess even still today

- ii. Things are the same today, as they were since Adam and Eve fell in the Garden
  - 1. So how can Zechariah sing of the things he did in his hymn?
  - 2. How could he joyfully exclaim that the Lord has delivered us from our enemies, when things are just as bad now as they have been since the beginning of creation??
- iii. Peter's answer is eye-opening... starting in verse 5
  - 1. *<sup>5</sup>For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, <sup>6</sup>and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. <sup>7</sup>But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. <sup>8</sup>But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*
    - a. Friends, the Lord is not like us
      - i. He exists outside of time as we know it
        - 1. We measure time according to the movement of our planet, as it orbits a gigantic ball of burning gases millions of miles away
        - 2. God created these things... with just a word of His mouth!
          - a. Our standards of measuring the days mean nothing to Him
          - b. With the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day
      - ii. From the beginning of Creation, God has been patiently unfolding His plan
        - 1. From Adam and Eve and their fall in the Garden, to Noah and the world being deluged in the flood...
        - 2. From the scattering of the peoples after Babel, to the calling of Abraham out of the pagan lands of his fathers
        - 3. From the days of Joseph's rise to power in Egypt, to the days of the harsh slavery of millions of his brothers and sisters
        - 4. From the exodus of the people of God under Moses, to the conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua
        - 5. From the abundance and prosperity under David and Solomon, to the destruction and exile under their wicked successors
        - 6. From the return of a remnant of exiles under Ezra and Nehemiah, to the 400 years of silence
        - 7. From the coming into this world of the Son of God, who has brought about redemption and salvation to all who would repent from their sin, to where we are this morning
        - 8. From where we are today, to the Day when the Lord will return, and the heavens and the earth are destroyed by the fire...
          - a. God has been patiently unfolding His plan

- i. Not once has His plan been messed up
    - ii. Not once has He had to switch to “Plan B”
    - iii. Not once did He change His mind
  - b. In the midst of all the chaos and wickedness and evil that we see in the world around us, God is still patiently bringing people to repentance, isn’t He?
- c. We get a perfect example of this in Acts 13, as Luke writes about Paul and Barnabas sharing the Gospel in the region of Pisidia
  - i. *In verses 48-52, we read that, “<sup>48</sup>when the Gentiles heard this [the Good News], they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. <sup>49</sup>And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. <sup>50</sup>But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. <sup>51</sup>But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. <sup>52</sup>And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*
    - 1. Did Paul and Barnabas experience persecution and hardship at the hand of those who hated them?
      - a. They certainly did
    - 2. But in the midst of that persecution, all in Pisidia whom God had appointed to eternal life BELIEVED in the Lord Jesus Christ
      - a. God is patiently bringing people to repentance and salvation, in spite of the evil that grows in our world every day
    - 3. Knowing this, the disciples were filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, even as they were being kicked out of the city
      - a. My friends, we live in what many would refer to as “the already, but not yet”
        - i. In his first coming, Christ has already begun the advancement of his Kingdom across the world
        - ii. But it is not yet fully realized
        - iii. The Kingdom will come in its fullness when this world, and the heavens above us, are all burned in the fire
          - 1. For as Peter said in 2 Peter 3:13, “But according to his promise we are waiting for NEW heavens and a NEW earth in which righteousness dwells.”
          - 2. We are called to live in light of that promise, brothers and sisters
            - a. And when we do, we will be freed up to serve the Lord without fear from our enemies, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days
            - b. We live in the already, but not yet
    - 4. Zechariah blesses the Lord in these first eight verses, and then he shifts his singing toward his 8-month-old son
- d. John will be called the prophet of the Most High
  - i. He will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, giving knowledge of salvation to the people in the forgiveness of their sins
    - 1. John certainly had hard words to say to the unrepentant
      - a. He called the Pharisees and Sadducees a “brood of vipers”
      - b. He warned those who did not repent that they were in danger of being thrown into the fires
      - c. He even stood before a King and rebuked him for living in an adulterous marriage

2. John was a prophet with the same holy fire as the prophets of old, and therefore those who were unrepentant in their sin were RIGHT to fear him
- ii. But look at what Zechariah sings in verses 78 and 79...
  1. *<sup>78</sup>because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high <sup>79</sup>to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*
- iii. Friends, when you read the words of the Old Testament prophets, they often feel harsh and gloomy and discouraging
  1. But underlying every message is something we often forget...
    - a. If it were not for the tender mercy of our God, the prophets would have never been sent in the first place!
    - b. Throughout their history, Israel was called by God a stiff-necked and rebellious people
      - i. They were constantly running after the idols of the other nations...
      - ii. Constantly disobeying the commands of God...
      - iii. Constantly forgetting that they had been given the incredible honor and privilege of being God's very own people
    - c. God SHOULD have wiped them out, on multiple occasions
  2. But because of His tender mercy, he instead sent prophets to them, men who brought the light of God's words into the darkness, and pleaded with the people to come out from under the shadow of death
    - a. These prophets were sent by God to guide the feet of His people back into the way of peace
      - i. Because God is MERCIFUL
      - ii. Because God is PATIENT, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance
  3. For the unrepentant in John's day, the words he said were hard and demanding
  4. But for those who understood their sin, who understood their rebellion against their God, John's words were seen as the words of a merciful God
    - a. The sunrise is on its way in the coming of the King
      - i. He will bring light to the darkness
      - ii. And he will guide our feet into the way of peace
        1. In his mercy, the Lord spoke to the people through the words of the prophets
        2. He spoke to the people through the words of John the Baptist
        3. And today He is speaking to us still
          - a. He is speaking to us through His Word, the Scriptures
  5. In His tender mercy, God teaches and encourages us through the Word
    - a. And in His tender mercy, God rebukes and corrects us through the Word
      - i. In all of it, God is constantly guiding our feet into the way of peace
    - b. We heard the contrast to this way of peace at the beginning of the service, didn't we?
      - i. Without warning him, I gave Ross the task of standing before the people of God like one of the Old Testament prophets, and bringing to us a word that NO ONE wants to hear
  6. My friends, our iniquities have made a separation between us and our God
    - a. Our sins have hidden His face from us, so that He does not hear
    - b. Our works are works of iniquity
    - c. Our thoughts are thoughts of iniquity



- d. Our feet RUN to evil
  - i. As Isaiah said in verse 8, the way of peace we did not know
    - 1. All of our roads were crooked
    - 2. And none of us who walked upon them knew peace
- e. But, because of the tender mercy of our God, He has visited and redeemed His people
  - i. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David
  - ii. He has saved us from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us
  - iii. He has remembered the mercy promised to OUR fathers in the Old Testament
  - iv. He has remembered the holy covenant He has made with Abraham
- f. In His tender mercy, God has given us the knowledge of salvation, in the forgiveness of our sins, through the precious blood of our Lord Jesus
  - i. And now, through His Holy Spirit, we who once walked the crooked paths of our iniquity, are now being guided down the way of peace
    - 1. This is the road that leads to Zion, my friends
    - 2. This is the road that leads to the new heavens and the new earth
      - a. It's a narrow path, and it is a hard path
      - b. We will often stumble and lose our way
        - i. And it is in those times where we need the prophetic words of this Book to correct us... to reprove us... to rebuke us
        - ii. And that won't be a pleasant experience
      - c. But do not forget, that is the evidence of God's tender mercy on YOUR life, as He lovingly guides our feet into the way of peace.
  - ii. Luke finishes this passage, and this chapter, with verse 80...
    - 1. *And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.*
      - a. Friends, as we live in the "already, but not yet," we live in a wilderness of our own
      - b. Exiles in a foreign land
      - c. Pilgrims on the way to a better country
    - 2. May it also be said of us, that by the tender mercy of God, we also will grow and become strong in spirit!