

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
**Senior Pastor Titus Green**  
**December 21, 2025**  
**DAWN IS BREAKING – Living in the Light of God’s Love**  
**Luke 1:57-80**

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This year for Advent, we have been walking through Luke chapter 1. These events are the prelude to the birth of Christ. Remember, it’s been 400 years since God last spoke to His people through the prophet Malachi. 400 years of darkness. But a new morning is about to begin. Dawn is breaking. Christ is coming into this world, and, in Luke 1, the first rays of light start to emerge over the horizon. God sends the angel, Gabriel, to an old priest named Zechariah with the message that he and his wife, Elizabeth, will have a son. The child was to be named John and would be a great prophet who would prepare the people of God to receive the Lord Jesus.

Zechariah didn’t believe the angel. He and Elizabeth were too old to have a child. Even more, Elizabeth was barren. So, he asks for a sign and the angel delivers one. He makes Zechariah unable to speak. It seems like Zechariah is also unable to hear. So, Zechariah’s world grows completely silent for 9 months.

In the meantime, God sent Gabriel to Mary with the news that she would be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. The angel also told Mary that her relative, Elizabeth, was pregnant with John. So, Mary sets out on a journey to visit Elizabeth. These two expectant women spend 3 months talking about all God was miraculously doing in them. And old Zechariah couldn’t get a word in edgewise.

***Luke 1:57–66***

***Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 59 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, 60 but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” 61 And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” 62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, 66 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.***

Let me point out a couple of quick things in these verses.

Verse 58 says that when Elizabeth’s friends and family hear about John’s birth, they realize the Lord had shown her great mercy. That phrase “had shown great” is one word in the original language. It’s the word translated “magnify” from last week’s text. God is magnifying His mercy. He isn’t making it bigger; He’s helping people see just how big His mercy is. So, this text is emphasizing the great mercy, kindness, and compassion of God.

But the central activity in verses 57-66 is giving this newborn a name. Remember, the angel said he was to be named John. So, Elizabeth says that will be his name. But the people around her don’t

want to let her name him that. They want to opt for a family name, like Zechariah Jr. So, everyone turns to dad to see if he can shed any light on it. He gets a tablet and writes that the baby's name is John. God had already given him that name.

Now, we hear the name John, and we just think of that name and the people we know who have that name. But, in the language these people were speaking, that word means something. It's kind of like someone named "Melody" or "Joy" or "Summer." When we hear those names, we immediately know what they mean. The name "John" means "God is Gracious."

So, God very intentionally named this prophet who would prepare the way for Jesus. And his name is "God is gracious." Verses 57-66 highlight the fact that God is desiring to show His mercy and grace to people.

Once Zechariah writes down John's name, the Lord restores his speech and the silence is broken. Not just Zechariah's silence, but the 400-year silence since the last prophetic word from God.

### **Luke 1:67-80**

***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." 80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.***

So, here we have the first prophetic word from God for His people since Malachi spoke 400 years earlier. It's all about Jesus and it continues the theme of God showing His mercy. Verse 72 says God has done something to "show the mercy promised to our fathers." And verse 78 says God has done something because of His "tender mercy."

That word "tender" is a word that refers to a deep and moving affection. God's mercy and grace are motivated from a place of deep affection. His kindness and compassion are motivated by love.

God wants this world to know that He loves us. He loves YOU. And in His love for us, He wants to show us the greatness of His mercy and grace. So, what has God done in love to show the greatness of His mercy and grace?

### **Luke 1:68-69**

***"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,***

God has visited us. That word "visit" means to come with the intent to help. God has come to help us. That's Christmas. That's what we've been talking about every week. By the plan of the Father, through the power of the Spirit, in the person of the Son, God entered His creation and became one of us. Jesus is God. And He came with a purpose. Verse 68 says He has redeemed His people. To

redeem means to liberate or release someone from an oppressive situation. How has Jesus done that? Through His work at the cross, He has saved us from our greatest enemies.

That's why verse 69 says He has raised up a horn of salvation. That's probably an unfamiliar phrase to most of us. It refers to the horn of a strong animal like an ox. That horn is a symbol of its strength and security. What is the strength of our salvation? It's the Lord Himself.

*Psalm 18:2-3*

*The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.*

The Lord is the strength of our salvation. We are saved because He is strong and mighty. We don't add anything to our salvation. We simply trust in Him and He mercifully and mightily saves us from our enemies.

That's exactly what Zechariah is saying in our text.

***Luke 1:71-72***

***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,***

***Luke 1:74***

***that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,***

Jesus came to redeem us...to liberate us from our enemies. Why? Because He loves us and wants to show us mercy and grace. And when you put all of that together, you get our big idea for this morning.

**BIG IDEA: IN LOVE, GOD SHOWED THE GREATNESS OF HIS MERCY AND GRACE BY COMING TO US AT CHRISTMAS SO HE COULD SAVE US AT THE CROSS.**

When we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate a rescue mission. That's a uniquely Christian element of Christmas. Billions of people will celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Some celebrate the life of Jesus as the best example of how we should live. Some celebrate the teaching of Jesus as the greatest insight into how life works best. Others celebrate Jesus as a symbol of altruistic ideals. But Jesus didn't merely come to be a teacher or an example or a symbol. Jesus came to be a Savior. He came to rescue us from our greatest enemies.

And that brings up a critical question: What enemies has Jesus defeated so that we might be saved?

Zechariah's prophesy says Jesus would save us from the hand of our enemies. Most of the Jews, including the disciples, thought that meant earthly enemies like the Roman Empire. But there is a greater enemy than the kingdoms and empires of this world. There is a realm of spiritual darkness that has set itself against God and every good thing He desires to accomplish in this world.

JESUS CAME TO DEFEAT SATAN, SIN, AND DEATH

*John 10:10*

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

The thief is the enemy of God – that’s Satan himself. He has come to steal, kill, and destroy every good thing God desires to give His people. And the way he does that is through sin. In the garden of Eden, Satan tempted Adam and Eve to turn their backs on God. He promised them freedom. He said, “You’ll become like God for yourselves.” But what he gave them was captivity. Mankind is captive to sin.

*Ephesians 2:1–2*

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—*

Since the fall of mankind in the garden of Eden, this world and everyone in it has been under the power and authority of the prince of the power of the air. We are captives to Satan because of our sin. That’s what’s wrong with our world and all of our lives. God has given mankind the ability to choose whether or not we would love and serve Him. And we have chosen to go the wrong way.

And since we have chosen to follow after Satan through disobedience to God, we have made ourselves enemies of God. Our sin has separated us from God. And if we die in that state, we will spend eternity separated from God.

But God is rich in mercy and grace and love. He chose to make a way for us to be saved from the power of Satan and sin and death itself. That’s what unites Christmas and the cross.

*Hebrews 2:14–15*

*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*

At Christmas, Jesus became one of us so that He could represent us at the cross. He entered death on our behalf and at the cross He took on the punishment for sin that we all deserved. That’s how we can be forgiven of sin and released from the power of Satan.

The only power Satan has over us is his ability to come into the courtroom of God and accuse us of sin. But that power has been stripped from him. Jesus has paid for our sin at the cross and there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ. When we place our faith and trust in Him, we are set free forever.

- Jesus defeated sin and delivered us from its penalty and power.
- Jesus defeated Satan and delivered us from his dominion and authority.
- Jesus defeated death and delivered us from fearing it.

We are forgiven and reconciled to God. So, we can live at peace. Peace with God and peace within. The worst thing that can happen to us in this life is that we would die. And if we are trusting in Christ, our death will lead us into the eternal presence of God where there is fulness of joy and pleasure forevermore (Psalm 16:11).

That’s why Jesus came. In His love, God showed us great mercy and grace. He came to us at Christmas so He could save us at the cross. That’s the good news of Zechariah’s prophecy...

***Luke 1:76-79***

***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.”***

Jesus came like a sunrise to this world trapped in the grip of darkness and the fear of death. The light of His life, death, and resurrection brings us peace with God through the forgiveness of sin. Only Jesus can save. Only Jesus can conquer death, hell, and the grave.

### CHRIST CAME TO US AT CHRISTMAS SO HE COULD SAVE US AT THE CROSS

It was Christmas Eve 1944. Elisabeth and her 12-year-old son, Fritz, were settling in for the night, trying to make the best of Christmas that year. It wasn't an easy task. They were Germans. World War 2 was raging. Earlier that year, their home had been lost during Allied bombing. So, they were forced to ride out the war in a hunting cabin in the Ardennes Forest.

That would have been hard enough, but 9 days before Christmas, the Germans launched a massive counteroffensive against the American and British forces in the Ardennes. What followed was the largest and costliest single battle for the Americans in World War 2 – the Battle of the Bulge. Nearly 80,000 Americans were killed, wounded, or captured. The fighting was fierce and unrelenting. And Elisabeth and Fritz were right in the middle of it on Christmas Eve.

Their plan was to eat a nice meal together for Christmas. Through the sounds of gunfire and artillery, a knock came at the door. Elisabeth opened it and standing outside were three young, weary soldiers. American soldiers. They had been separated from their battalion for three days and one of them, a young man named Harry, was in bad shape from a gunshot wound to the leg. They didn't speak German and she didn't speak English. But she knew they were desperate. She also knew that if she were caught helping the enemy it could result in her execution. But, in an act of mercy and grace that could have cost her life, she let the 3 Americans inside. She discovered one of the soldiers spoke a little French, as did she, and they were able to communicate a little bit. She dressed Harry's wounds the best she could. Then she and Fritz turned their attention to making Christmas Eve dinner for their guests.

About that time, another knock came at her door. She assumed it would be more Americans looking for shelter. She opened the door and was greeted by 4 more soldiers. German soldiers. They needed a place to stay for the night and requested to come inside.

Elisabeth had to think quickly. She looked at the soldiers and could see that they were young. Two of them were only 16 years old. The Corporal was the oldest at 23. So, she took a risk and decided to take control of the situation. She told them they were welcome to be her guests. But warned them that she had 3 other guests that the German soldiers might not consider friends. Then she said she was old enough to be their mother and sternly told them there would be no fighting in her home at Christmas. Amazingly, the German soldiers agreed, laying down their guns before coming inside. Elisabeth hurried in ahead of them, found the American soldier who spoke French and did her best to explain the situation to him. Initially, all of the soldiers were apprehensive but one of the Germans spoke English and conveyed their agreement to Elisabeth's Christmas peace treaty. He had even studied medicine before joining the war. He tended to Harry's leg.

And then they all sat down to Christmas dinner. 7 weary men. Delivered, if only for one night, from their enemies. Before they ate, Elisabeth offered what is known as the common table prayer from the German Lutheran tradition. *Come, Lord Jesus, be our Guest. And let Thy gifts to us be blessed.* Years later, Fritz recalled tears in her eyes as she said these words. He also recalled the tears in the eyes of those soldiers, too.

There's no way of knowing all the reasons they wept, but perhaps it's because they knew the peace they enjoyed that night would come to an end the next morning. They needed someone stronger and more merciful than their host that Christmas Eve. They needed a greater rescue and a greater peace. They needed Jesus and the gifts that only He can give. We all need Jesus. And we don't just need Him, we have Him.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son at Christmas so He could save us at the cross.

So, how do we respond to the truth of this morning's text? Place your Trust in Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:8-9*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

You can be delivered from your greatest enemies. You can be forgiven of your sin and restored to God as your Father. You can have heaven as your eternal home. Praise God for His mercy and grace.

This prophecy of Zechariah is known as the Benedictus. That's the Latin word for Blessed, which is the first word of this prophecy. Blessed means "worthy of praise."

If you are trusting in Jesus, you have reason to praise God this Christmas.

- You are saved from Sin.
- You are saved from Satan.
- You are saved from Death

IN LOVE, GOD SHOWED THE GREATNESS OF HIS MERCY AND GRACE BY COMING TO US AT CHRISTMAS SO HE COULD SAVE US AT THE CROSS

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.