

Zechariah's Song

Advent 2025 – The Songs of Advent (CGS#2) – Luke 1:68-79

INTRODUCTION: Advent is a season where we take time to both remember the birth of Jesus and look forward to his second coming. This year, we're remembering by looking at the songs in the book of Luke, and this week's song was sung by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. Some things to keep in mind about the context of this song:

- Zechariah was a priest, which meant he served the Lord in the temple in Jerusalem (Luke 1:8-9).
- He and his wife Elizabeth were "advanced in years" and had no child of their own (Luke 1:7).
- They were righteous and trusted God to send the Messiah (Luke 1:6).
- God had not sent a prophet to Israel in over 400 years.

When the angel spoke to Zechariah in the temple (Luke 1:11), that was the moment all of creation had been longing for since Adam and Eve's fall in Genesis 3. It was the first domino in the unfolding wonder of God's incredible plan to redeem his people. And Zechariah's response is amazing. After being mute for a time (because he didn't initially believe the angel), he bursts into a song of praise to God. But look closely at his song. It's a prophecy, which means it is revealing God's Word, and several interesting things stand out. Primarily, it's mostly about the Messiah, not Zechariah's own son. He puts his son's role in its proper place: to prepare the way for God's Messiah. Another point to notice is what he calls his son: "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High" (v.76). He will be *a prophet*. That's a huge deal. Again, there hadn't been a prophet of the Lord in Israel in over 400 years. To understand the importance of this moment, think about the Old Testament pattern: God's people would be invaded or enslaved, they would call out to God, and then he would send a prophet to communicate his plans and purposes to them. This moment was confirming for them that God was indeed listening, and he was working out his plans and purposes for them. In other words, this was God saying, "You've been waiting for me for hundreds of years, and now you will see my salvation *in your lifetime*." How amazing!

But the biggest thing to notice is Zechariah's faith in God. He starts his song with a remembrance of God's mercy in the past (v. 68-75) and, like we talked about last week in looking at Mary's song, faith requires remembering. Zechariah remembers the promises God made to Abraham, to Israel, to David, and now he is rejoicing in confident hope that God is finally providing the long-expected fulfillment of those Messianic promises. The Messiah, whom we call Jesus, is on the way. He will be the "horn of salvation" spoken of by the prophets, he will deliver Israel, and he will embody the mercy promised in God's covenants with his people.

Like we talked about on Sunday, a covenant is a promise, a partnership, and a mutually binding relationship. God had promised to deliver his people, and in response they would worship him alone. In Zechariah's song, we see God upholding his end of the partnership (sending a deliverer), and Zechariah's incredible faith that God won't stop at delivering them now, but will lead them into true, lasting, eternal peace. Look at the last line of his song: "to guide our feet into the way of peace" (v. 79). Peace is not just freedom from fear (although it includes that), but the biblical idea is much bigger. Peace is "to be brought into a state of completeness or wholeness," or what the Bible calls "shalom." Jesus is the only one who brings us into lasting shalom. Zechariah knew that God is always faithful to fulfill his promises, and his promise then and now is this week's main idea: **God has purposed for us to experience true peace.** And that peace is only found in Jesus.

GETTING STARTED – As you begin your group time, take time to answer this question together: Have you ever gotten to share really big, happy news before? What was it like to keep it to yourself? How did it feel when you finally got to share it?

IN THE WORD – Let's dig back into the passage. It is important to strengthen our muscles in reading God's Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God's Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage out loud to the group. Then, follow the simple OPA method below:

O - Observe: Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

P - Principles: From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

A - Apply: Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God's Word. Remember, we believe that God's Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live every day. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

Note: Another way to approach your time together is to talk through the following questions about the passage we are studying this week.

1. What did you hear God's Spirit say to you through the passage this week? How does it encourage you? How does it sharpen you?
2. How have you seen God at work in your life this week? Have you enjoyed him? Have you heard his voice and the leading of his Spirit? Big ways or small ways.
3. Over this Advent season, what have you been reminded of regarding the character and nature of God? How has this shown up in your life?
4. How does this song demonstrate Zechariah's faith in God?
5. Compare the role of John the Baptist with believers today. How is our role different from his? How is it similar?
6. What promises of God have been the most comforting to you? (Here are a few to consider: Psalm 16:11, 23:6, 84:11; Isaiah 41:10, 55:10-11; Ezekiel 36:27; Matthew 28:20; John 10:27-29; Romans 8:28; Philippians 1:6, 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; Revelation 2:10, 22:20)