

## **A Study in Luke**

Week Three

Luke 1:57-80

### **Day One**

57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.

58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,

60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

61 They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

v. 57 – Just as Gabriel had predicted, Elizabeth had a son.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isa 55:10-11).

Be encouraged today. Whatever God said He would do for you, He will do it! The word may delay and tarry, but it shall come to pass.

v. 58 – Friends and loved ones share your joy. Those that don't have your best interests at heart do not. Are you involved in any what I have come to term, "toxic relationships"? Is it time to end that relationship? Proverbs states:

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

v. 59 – Zechariah must have been going crazy at this point, wondering if and when he would ever speak again. He is the proud father of a son for whom he has waited all his life and he can't talk to the baby, his wife or anyone else about the happy occasion. Unbelief has its consequences and for Zechariah, the consequence was an inability to share what God was doing in his life. Is your unbelief doing the same thing to you? Has your unbelief got your tongue, so to speak? Then put your trust in God and what He has promised and hopefully He will loose your tongue to glorify Him.

v. 60 – I am partial to the name John for obvious reasons. John literally means the gift or grace of God. I am sure that Zechariah was writing Elizabeth notes during the time that he was mute, so he communicated that the baby's name was to be John according to the word of Gabriel. The people were astonished that they were breaking tradition using that name. People are often too concerned about following tradition and should be more

concerned about following God. Are you bound by tradition? Which ones? Is there anything that God is telling you to do that you can't do because of tradition?

Breaking tradition requires courage. I urge you to be courageous today and obey God, even if that means you are flying in the face of family or religious tradition.

### **Day Two**

62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child.

63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John."

64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.

v. 62 – This was the moment of truth for Zechariah. He had another chance to unequivocally believe God and obey Him, having missed the first opportunity when Gabriel first came. And now as a priest who stood for the people, he had to decide for himself whether he would break with tradition or continue to follow the ways of his people.

vs. 63&64 – Hooray for Zechariah! He chose to follow God and abandon tradition! And what happened? His tongue was loosed immediately. Has unbelief or fear got you tongue-tied? Then isn't it time you broke free from that which binds you and keeps you from speaking? Is it time to speak up to your family, leadership or spouse, not in an arrogant or belligerent way? Does God want you to do something that you *aren't* doing because you are afraid of what others will say? There is no one who can help you break free; you must do it for yourself.

It is of note that once Zechariah was released, he praised God. God was his focus and not the circumstances or what he had been through. It's not about what you've been through; it's about what God is doing and who He is. Zechariah didn't use his tongue to tell everyone what he had been through; he used his mouth to praise God.

### **Day Three**

65 The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things.

66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

v. 65 – There are times when I have taken the things of God for granted. I have treated an awesome thing with casual nonchalance. This morning I woke up and I just kept saying, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus." I reflected on how He helped me in ministry these last few days. I meditated on how kind He has been to me, and what He

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has done for me. I am so unworthy, and He is so worthy. I want to write about His goodness so others can know what He has done and who He is.

How about you? Why not stop right now and praise the Lord for His goodness. There is a song that says,

“Think about His love, think about His goodness.  
Think about His grace, that’s brought us through.  
For as high as the heavens above, so great is the measure of our Father’s love.  
Great is the measure of our Father’s love.”

Think about His love and mercy today.

v. 66 – Everything that God does in our lives starts out small. Often those things are depicted as children even in our dreams. There is always a mystery as to what those things can become. We are introduced in the Bible to Moses, Samuel, Solomon and John the Baptist when they were babies. God watched over them and did a work in them that made them who they were. God will do the same for the baby things He has started in you:

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:4-6).

That doesn’t mean that you and I don’t have a role in nurturing and protecting God’s purpose that He has birthed in us. But ultimately, He will complete it. He will get us right where we need to be to do what we need to do if we cooperate. If we don’t, we can frustrate the grace of God:

As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

Don’t receive God’s grace in vain. Someone once said to pray like everything depends on God and then work like everything depends on me. I like that advice.

#### **Day Four**

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:  
68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.  
69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David  
70(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

v. 67 – I believe that the spiritual gifts operate today and prophecy is one of them.

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1-2).

Now that he was talking, Zechariah yielded his tongue to do God's will. He had learned his lesson not to yield it to unbelief. Now He was speaking for God. You can only speak for God if you speak from faith. Everything else is unbelief. What are you talking about today?

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:13-15).

Do you have an impression or thought for someone that you believe may be from the Lord to encourage or direct that person? Then today you must call, write or see them to tell them what is on your heart. You may ask, "How do I know this is from the Lord? What if I'm wrong?" Ah, but that's where faith comes in. You can't put your faith in your ability to hear God; you must put your faith in God's ability to speak to you and through you. Go do it!

v. 68 – Zechariah saw what God was doing for His people and not just for Elizabeth and him. He saw God's purpose in the smaller purpose of his family. We can have a limited and selfish perspective of God, limiting Him to a personal valet who is blessing, helping or providing for us. But God's purposes go beyond the tip of your nose or the front door of your house. God not only wants to bless you, He wants to use you and your testimony to bless others. Make up your mind to see the bigger picture of God's purpose.

v. 69 – Horns are always symbols of strength and power, as the horns of an animal are strong in and of themselves. They also have the power of the animal behind them when they are used. God's "horn" of salvation is powerful and has God behind it. That means no one can stop it or hinder its work. What are you concerned about today? Perhaps it will help you to know that God has raised up a horn for you. Why don't you picture God with horns running at your enemies of lack, weakness or fear? Then picture God tearing those enemies up with His horns. I know this may be a bit "far out," but if it helps, do it. God is strong and He uses His strength on your behalf and for all His people.

v. 70 – Zechariah wasn't only seeing God's purpose for the now, he was seeing it in the context of what God had done in the past. There are times when I have thought that God's work started with me in this generation. In truth, God has been at work throughout the ages. It is important that I understand what God is doing today in the context of what He has done and what He has said He would do. That is why the study of church history is so important, along with Old Testament studies. Do you have any books on church

history? If so, why not read it? If not, consider getting one. You need to have a better historical perspective on the things of God, so you will know how you fit into it all.

### Day Five

71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us-  
72 to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,  
73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him  
without fear

v. 71 – I wonder if Zechariah understood what he was prophesying: That sin and death were the enemies. At that time, the Romans were considered the enemies of Israel, but John and Jesus were not born to overthrow Rome. Those who speak for God often speak beyond their comprehension when they are “in the Spirit.”

The salvation that Jesus and John preached was spiritual, not political. The same must be true of the Church today. I fear lest many see salvation through politics. While believers should be involved politically, they must not put their trust in the government for things that only God can provide.

vs. 72&73 – God swore a covenant to Abraham several thousand years before Zechariah spoke this word. Now God was preparing to fulfill His word. I cannot imagine a people holding onto a promise that God made thousands of years earlier, but that is the case with Israel. But many misinterpreted the Word and would miss their day of God’s visitation. It is important that you not formulate ideas of how and what God will do according to His promises. You must keep all your expectations in Him and not in His word or your interpretations of His promises.

v. 74 – We now come boldly to the throne of God’s grace because of what Jesus did and John prepared the way for Jesus to do. We don’t have to fear access to God or judgment if we are in Jesus. God has done away with fear. I remember one leader saying, “When you sin, that isn’t the time to run *from* God, but time to run *to* God.” That is the fear that Jesus came to abolish.

Are you afraid of God? I’m not talking about reverential fear that we should all have. I’m talking about afraid to talk to Him, afraid of His wrath for your sins? If so, be free today. God sent Jesus to calm your fears. Run into God today and be safe:

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower, the righteous run to it and are safe”  
(Proverbs 18:10).

And remember what Jesus said:

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for

yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Luke 12:32-34).

### **Day Six**

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

v. 75 – There is only one way to serve God in holiness and righteousness all our days, and that is to put on the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. Our righteousness is not our deeds but our faith in Christ that enables Christ to live in us:

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

Are you working to be righteous or are you righteous in Christ? There is a big difference and I pray that the Lord will help you see the difference.

v. 76 – Zechariah then prophesied the purpose that his son John would have: to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. If we are parents, we play a huge role in our children knowing what their purpose is. If we aren't parents, we can still play a large part in helping others know their purpose. How you may ask? Through encouragement and through sharing any thought or impression that we may have that would help someone else realize who they are in Christ. Is there someone you can encourage today in their purpose? Don't assume they know what you have to tell them, or at least don't assume that they don't need to hear it again.

v. 77 – Zechariah went on to prophesy how John would prepare the way for the Lord. He would do so by helping Israel to see that their salvation didn't rest in works, but in the forgiveness of sins. Those who heard what John had to say would then realize that Jesus came to forgive their sins, thus Jesus would be the source of their salvation. They would then turn from the empty rituals of the Temple to a living faith in Christ. John and Jesus made a powerful "one-two punch" from the Lord. But the Pharisees and others who

preferred to approach God on the basis of works were disappointed and even hostile toward this message.

Are you hostile to that message? Even if you know Christ, did you begin in faith but now see your access to Him by way of your own works, even the works of prayer and Bible reading? The way to God is still through the forgiveness of sins, which is by faith and through grace. It is never through our own efforts.

### **Day Seven**

78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

vs. 78&79 – What a beautiful picture this paints! When Jesus came, He came like a rising sun from heaven that would shine on those living in darkness and death. Can you see the natural sun rising and shining on everything at the break of day? That is how Jesus came into my life and into the world.

Furthermore, the light of Jesus came to direct and guide us into the path of peace with God. How great is the love of God! How deep is God's compassion for His creation. How great is His love for us!

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:6-8).

If this doesn't make you want to praise and worship God, then you don't really see what He has done for you and me. At the time of John's birth, it had been 400 years since the Lord spoke through the prophet Malachi. Now God is about to move on behalf of His people and that "move" has lasted until this very day. The sun of God's mercy has risen on you; His grace has led you to Him. Hallelujah!

v. 80 – So John was born and lived in the desert. John did not go to the people; the people came to him. And I would assume that it wasn't a joyride to go into the desert to see John. God required that those who would receive His grace do something to get it, but their trip did not earn them that grace. It just positioned them to receive it. Man never does anything to warrant God's grace, but man can easily reject the conditions for that grace. Does that make sense?

Is there some desert that you must go into at this present time to meet God? You cannot stipulate the conditions for God's grace, yet that grace is free. I think humility is the

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overriding condition and that may mean going someplace where you wouldn't think you will meet God.

Also it appears that John grew strong in isolation. Your quiet time with God is so important that I hope you are not missing it. I do not believe that you must have your quiet time in the morning, although it appears to be easier to have it before the demands of the day begin. But I urge you to have your quiet time whenever it works for you—just don't miss it! Don't begin to think, however, that your faithfulness to that quiet time earns you the grace and presence of God. It doesn't. It is a gift of God, no matter what conditions you have to meet to receive it.