

## WAIT NO MORE

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December 15th, 2019

I like Christmas. I like the anticipation of it. I like gathering together with family and friends. Taking a little time off. I like the smells. The pine and the fireplace. The foods we eat. The traditions we share. I like the games that we play. The stories we tell and the songs that we sing together.

Done rightly, this holiday, these days of celebration that we're in, they can lead us to worship. To reflect back and see the beauty of who Christ is and what he's done.

Speaking of these once a year songs that we sing, this morning one of them actually led me to the text that we're going through. The second verse of the song "O come, O come Emmanuel" begins this way:

*O come thou dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here,  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.*

And I got to thinking. I've sung the song "O come, O come Emmanuel" since I was a child and I've never questioned what a dayspring was. Now I assumed that dayspring was a name given to Jesus by a prophet or someone at some point. But then when I went through my Bible, I couldn't find the word dayspring in it. It wasn't there. At least it wasn't there in my translation. But in the King James translation, which would've been the English speaking world's bible in 1861 at the time that "O Come O Come Emmanuel" was written, Luke chapter 1, verse 78 says

*The dayspring from on high hath visited us,  
To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

Isn't that beautiful?

Now our modern translation simply translates this word as: sunrise. Which might be a lot more understandable than dayspring is for us here today. And isn't that a beautiful picture of the new reality that dawns when Jesus Christ is born? The darkness of sin and death begin to disappear as the light of the glory of God in Jesus Christ comes into the world. And this verse, this verse about the dayspring, it's a part of a prophecy that's recorded in the book of Luke. A prophecy given to us by John the Baptist's Dad, Zechariah.

And there's something unique about this prophecy. I mean, after all of the waiting, the years, and the heartache, blessings, and curses, kings, and battles, from Eden to Egypt to Israel to Babylon and back. This is the last prophecy about Jesus before he comes.

After all of the waiting, the wait is about to be over.

Now this Zechariah wasn't a prophet in the way that Isaiah or Jeremiah was, he didn't write the book of Zechariah, and if you go back a little bit in the book of Luke to chapter 1:5 we can see that his day job was that he was a priest in the temple. And in the course of doing his priestly work he's visited by the angel Gabriel with a message from God. Gabriel tells him that after years of trying to have a child, that Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth are going to have a son who will be a prophet, filled with the holy spirit from birth, who, with a message of salvation, will prepare the way for God's messiah.

Zechariah responds to the good news of Gabriel by saying: Are you sure? 'cause we're old?

And in response, it appears that Gabriel allows some his personality to shine through and he answers the objection with what might be the greatest heavenly smack down ever recorded.

Gabriel says: Do you know who I am? Do you know know who I work for?

He says it like this in Luke 1:19

*And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."*

And the word of God is fulfilled. After living a lifetime without the ability to conceive, Elizabeth is miraculously pregnant and Zechariah, because of his doubt, is miraculously silent.

After the baby is born, Zechariah regains his ability to speak, names the child John (as Gabriel instructed) and he is filled with the Holy Spirit and begins to prophesy. And this is our text for today and now we know how we got here.

## **Passage**

Luke 1:67-79

*67 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.”*

So here we have a cranky and cursed old man open his mouth for the first time but his words aren't bitter, they're beautiful.

What was so profound to Zachariah? And why is this important for us to consider today?

Here is what we will see:

1. **Salvation Has Come Into The World**
  2. **Salvation Is More Than We Could Have Ever Dreamed of**
- and lastly, as we close today, like Zechariah we'll be encouraged to
3. **Wait and Believe in God's Salvation**

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Our first Section for today is this:

## **Salvation has Come into the World**

and in this section we're going to see two reasons why

The first reason is  
**because of God's Mercy**

and the second is  
**because God keeps his promises**

Our primary text is concerns the last prophecy about Jesus before he came.

But consider,  
the first prophecy about Jesus Christ in scripture comes almost simultaneously with God's first act of mercy toward humanity. Jesus and mercy have always been intertwined.  
Jesus has always been the solution to our problem with sin and our separation from God.

In the garden of Eden, Adam, the first man, is told in Genesis 2:16

*The Lord God commanded the man, saying,  
“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

After Adam and Eve are deceived by the serpent and take and eat this fruit, God finds them , their sin is exposed and...

God talks to them? Have you ever thought about that?

He doesn't kill them, he talks to them like children. He tells them what life will be like now, what the consequences for their disobedience will be and then God himself clothes them in their nakedness. In middle of the failure and heartache of it all, God doesn't destroy humanity, instead he shows mercy. Our God is merciful.

And in Genesis 3:15 we see the first proclaiming of God's salvation

When to the serpent God says,

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."*

The hope of salvation. The hope of a savior who will crush sin and satan, this has been with us since the fall. This is where it began. The story of God's mercy and God's promise keeping. What God has said, he will do

Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Moses, David...

Each of them saw the foundation of God's salvation being built.

A people created for God's possession, a righteous law that promised blessing, and a family tree from which God's savior would come.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Micah, others...

They all prophecy and fill in the details. What will this king be like, what will he do and go through because of God's love for his people? They make God's plan of redemption clearer and more beautiful.

And generation after generation, God forgives, and restores. He calls his people back though they turn away from him over and over again and at multiple points in redemptive history the only thing holding God's plan of salvation together, the only reason the ship stays on course, it's two things:

God is merciful and he keeps his promises

Do you believe it? If the answer is yes, amen. Praise God for the gift of faith he's given you. This is only something that God can do and it should cause you to rejoice all the more that he's working this way in your heart.

But if you don't believe it. If you're functionally operating as if though God is not merciful and that he doesn't keeps his promises; Think about what might change in your life if you did?

So often what can keep us from trusting God in his mercy and in his promise keeping, is our sin. We look at our own lives and sinful decisions we've made, the ways we've messed up and hurt people, and hidden away and we say "well God hasn't fixed me yet. I'm still messed up. I still sin."

And we convince ourselves that God doesn't want to see us. He doesn't want to talk to us. We move and react through life as if he can't keep his promises and as if he hasn't kept them to us.

But church, it's God who is faithful and trustworthy even when we've been faithless. Our sin and our inability to keep our promises exposes our weakness. Not God's. Our disobedience exposes our frailty, our helplessness, our faithlessness. Not God's. And when we feel far from God, it's not God who has moved. God's grace is near, God's mercy is near, God's salvation is near

As James says in James 4:8a

*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*

So what are you waiting for? Turn to the Lord today and find him faithful in his mercy and his promises.

Like his promise for salvation in Romans 10:9

*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*

His promise to help us to evangelize and defend our faith

Luke 12:11-12

*do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.*

And find Jesus faithful to his promise to be with us forever as we labor in the building of the church and disciple making  
when in Matthew 28:20 Jesus says

*behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

Whether you've walked with the Lord for years or the Spirit of God is calling you to take your first steps. Don't wait in this.

Salvation has come and is found in Jesus.

Today I've been praying for you. That God might give you faith in the middle of whatever you're facing. The great needs we have and the dissatisfaction we have in our heart, they are meant to point us to the one who is the only supply of true joy.

Zechariah has found it. He's found true joy.

In verse 68, Zechariah's prophecy begins with exulting praise.

Remember, he's had nine months of silence to think about what God is doing in these moments and days.

And when He can open his mouth and communicate again, he rejoices over God.

While he wasn't immediately convinced that he would be a Father when Gabriel spoke to him, he is now so convinced of God's salvation that he puts it in the past tense. Look at how Zechariah speaks of God's Mercy and Promise keeping:

Luke 1:68-75

*"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,  
the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us  
that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,  
might serve him without fear,  
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

and later in verse 78 he goes on to say that everything God is doing is:

*because of the tender mercy of our God,*

Now "Tender" is not a word I'd use for a relationship that is far off and in the background. Tender is a word we'd use for how a mother is with her newborn child. Tender describes how you come alongside a brother or a sister in the middle of their deepest despair. But here, tender also describes the mercy of our God.

God's mercy is tender mercy, and promised mercy.  
It is sure and trustworthy mercy that has been in the works for a long time  
In the text look again at why it says that God has visited and redeemed his people

Luke 1:72

*to show the mercy promised to our fathers  
and to remember his holy covenant,  
the oath that he swore to our father Abraham*

Do you remember what God promised Abraham?

Genesis 12:1-3

*Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

In Jesus Christ, God has done exactly what he promised and the entire earth has been blessed with the invitation to come, see, and believe in God's salvation from sin. God has made a way where there was no way. By God's Grace, The old sacrificial system could, by the shedding of blood imperfectly atone for sin, but in Jesus' coming and dying on the cross for sin, the earth is blessed with a way to be restored to God and to stand before him as righteous.

This brings us to our next section because that is just one of the many ways that

## **Salvation is more than we could have ever dreamed of**

Have your expectations ever been completely shattered?

Have you ever had a preconceived idea that was just wrong by an order of magnitude but in a good way?

You know five years ago when I was first considering the call to come and be a part of Sovereign Hope Church in Missoula MT, I had no idea what to expect about this part of the country. I think I initially imagined a sparsely populated wasteland. Something like a desert but,..... cold.

And while I'm kind of right. Admit it. I was really, really wrong about what it is like here most of the time.

My wife and I have a favorite month here in western Montana. It is not December. Our favorite month is May and that's because after all the snow, and the gray days of winter that hang over you like a weighted blanket, we anticipate May. We long for it. We talk about it. We make plans. Because that's when it warms up, and the grass is back, and the sun is bright, the skies are blue and the days are so long that even at 11 PM you're still catching the trails of sunlight in the sky behind the mountains. We wait for May because May in Missoula is unlike anything. It is so beautiful, I didn't even have a category for it before I lived here and saw it

The salvation that God has been planning for humanity from eternity past is like that. So complete and amazing and good that you couldn't dream it up on your most imaginative day. Zechariah could never have dreamed the Messiah would have to die to redeem God's people.

Just think about how over the course of traveling together, year after year, Jesus had to explain his death and resurrection multiple times to those closest to him and the disciples still didn't get it. None of the Jews in Jesus' day would have.

And so when Zechariah says that God has visited and redeemed his people, When he says in V. 71 that we'll be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. When he says in V. 79 that the messiah will give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Zechariah is hoping that his people, Israel, will be delivered from the oppression of Roman rule and that the Messiah, this king promised out of David's family line, he will reign over them instead. But God's Salvation is an order of magnitude better than he could have ever imagined because

## **We're not just saved from man's oppression - We're saved from sin's oppression**

This is massively good news.

Because the greatest problem that world has ever faced isn't the anger, violence and oppression of one nation against another or one human against another; Our greatest problem is that we've sinned against a holy God and in that condition we find ourselves justly deserving of God's wrath.

Now in America, we may not feel this hope as profoundly as some of our brothers and sisters around the world do. There are millions of Christians today who live in countries that are opposed and closed to the gospel. and the governmental or cultural persecution they experience can range from simple bureaucratic difficulty, to imprisonment, or even to death.

The new gospel reality of deliverance from sin through Jesus Christ gives us boldness and comfort in a hostile world. Our greatest oppressor has been defeated. If our greatest fears have been relieved, every other fear becomes smaller.

We like the Psalmist in Psalm 118:5-7 can say:

Out of my distress I called on the Lord;  
the Lord answered me and set me free.  
The Lord is on my side; I will not fear.  
What can man do to me?  
The Lord is on my side as my helper;  
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

Do you remember what Jesus has to say about our enemies?

Matthew 5:44

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

This is astounding. This is Jesus revealing what God's kingdom is like.

Because we've been forgiven by God when we didn't deserve to be, we can forgive others when they don't deserve it. And the gospel change that God is working through us is then felt and seen and it calls others to find out who this Savior is.

Zechariah is right that Jesus' redemption will save us from our enemies.  
It's just so much better and complete than he thought.



Another example is that

## **We're not just saved from enemies - We're saved from our greatest enemy; death**

Now I don't know about you, but when I see the verses in our passage that say things like  
"we'll be saved from the hand of our enemies"  
"we'll be delivered from the hand of our enemies"

I have trouble thinking about who my enemy is. There are no bully's in my life anymore and I've never been a soldier and I've never faced an enemy combatant. I don't what that's like. But all of us feel the profound wrongness of our greatest enemy. He brings sorrow, pain, anger, anxiety, fear, loss, destruction

There are many in our congregation today that have recently felt the pain and the sorrows that this enemy brings. Still, many more who are walking close beside those who are in the middle of profound physical sufferings and end of life ailments.

Romans 6:23 tells us plainly who this enemy is and where this he came from  
*The wages of sin is death*

And not just the passing of our mortal bodies but a spiritual death as well.  
For those who die in their sins, death and separation from God are frightening truths.

But I only read half of Romans 6:23  
The wages of sin is death, but there is hope

Here's the full verse

Romans 6:23  
For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And so Zechariah is right again but It's so much better. God's messiah will save us from our enemy, our greatest enemy. And the wage of sin, death, it's paid by Jesus himself. In the cross Jesus would take everything that we deserved, and by faith we receive all that he deserves. Death loses its sting because of the eternal inheritance that Jesus has delivered to us through faith. And this brings us to the last way that salvation is better than Zechariah could have dreamed.

## **We're not just saved for now - We're saved for eternity**

In our text picking up at Luke 1:74-75

*being delivered from the hand of our enemies, (we) might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all of our days.*

To be restored to God so fully, so completely that we might stand before God without fear, in holiness, and in righteousness? This sounds like the relationship that God had with humanity in the Garden of Eden. That's how good this salvation is. That's how complete it is. Eternity with God, restored with fellowship and peace.

But there is something different.

The relationship is not exactly the same as it was before. It's deeper.

When Zechariah in V. 77-78 talks about the message that his son John will preach. He says that this message will:

*Give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,  
because of the tender mercy of our God.*

So, yes something has changed.

The relationship is deeper and it's deeper because we now know God's grace. We sinned against God and God has forgiven us at a great cost. Not because we deserved it, merited it, worked for it, or earned it. Salvation, and eternity with God - without fear, in holiness, in righteousness, forever. This is a gift of God's grace.

And now we know and obey and love and wonder and worship, fueled by God's grace. and wonder and awe at the gospel is the fuel for a life of worship that will extend into and carry us through eternity.

When Jesus came to this earth, the grace of God appeared.  
He visited and redeemed his people.

As we begin to wrap things up

Let's look ahead to what Paul said about Jesus' visitation in the book of Titus

Titus 2:11-14

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,  
training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions,  
and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,*

*waiting for our blessed hope,  
the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,  
who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness  
and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

Jesus Christ, the grace of God has appeared  
and he's our blessed hope for the future who will appear again in glory.

The Wait is over, but the wait has also just begun This is what the season of advent is about. It's about this unique place in history that we occupy with the ability to look back and look forward. Christ has come and Christ is coming again and for a little while we are here in-between. What do we do for now?

## **Wait and Believe in God's Salvation**

And there are two ways in which we will do this:

1. **We trust in the message**
2. **We trust in the Savior**

In the 12 verses of Zechariah's prophecy, only two speak of Zechariah's son, John, who will grow up to be John the Baptist. This is what he says:

Luke 1:76-77

And you, child, 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,

Salvation in the forgiveness of sins

We trust in this message.

This is the message that changes everything. John the baptist had it and today we have it. Today I hope that's what you've heard.

The apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15-16 puts it this way:

1 Timothy 1:15-16

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. What a simple and profound and beautiful message. And this is the message that we've been entrusted with because it's only by believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ that sinners can be saved.

This is why our church is centered around the preaching of the gospel. This is why we faithfully preach the Gospel every week. Why we're training Pastoral residents who will preach. This is why we support missionaries who bring the gospel around the world and why we meet on the University campus each week to preach the Gospel to students. The preaching of the Gospel is

how people know about God's mercy and his promises. How can people know the message to believe for Salvation if they've never heard it?

Paul in Romans 10:14 says

*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*

When you think about it, It's an amazing thing what we're a part of here each time we gather. We're apart of something holy here today. Because the gospel, is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. When we gather, we remind ourselves about Christ's coming, Christ's salvation, and Christ's return. We let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in our hearts to God. like Colossians 3:16 instructs us to.

We do this because want to give the knowledge of salvation away and then trust the Holy Spirit to turn hearts in faith.

So we **trust in the message** and we also **trust in the Savior**.

Let's finish our text.

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,  
to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,  
because of the tender mercy of our God,*

*whereby the sunrise (the dayspring) shall visit us from on high  
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

To Wait and Believe in God's Salvation is to let the light of Christ shine on you, and it's to let the light of his word and his gospel guide you. In Jesus' own words he says:

John 8:12

*"I am the light of the world.  
Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

So does this word of God light the path of your life today?  
What does following Christ look like for you?

On the face of it, waiting and believing sounds extremely passive.  
But believing is full of activity.

It demands something something of you. It'll change you. How you spend your time, your money, your energy. How you talk, how you dress, what you do for fun. What you watch on TV, what you do on Friday night. How you parent, how treat your spouse, how you treat anybody

Only believers will do the hard work of belief. But they'll do it with joy because of incredible gift of God's grace in the gospel.

So do you do the work of belief?

What's changed and what needs to change while we're here between Christ's coming and his coming again?

We're waiting for Christ's return, but don't wait on doing this:  
Treasure Christ in your heart today and he will be your treasure forever.

In the first advent, Zechariah couldn't have imagined how perfect, how complete, and how beautiful God's salvation would be.

And when Christ comes again in the second advent,  
He himself will bring the dawn of new eternal day.  
and it will better than we could have ever dreamed of.

*The dayspring from on high hath visited us,  
To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

The the wait is over for the salvation Jesus brings.  
May we live lives of worship now, do the work of believing now and ready our hearts for that moment when our faith will be made sight and Jesus brings a new eternal day.