

Sermon Discussion 12 December 2021

Read Luke 1:67-79

Dig Deeper

This is the second major song of praise in Luke: the **“Benedictus.”** This title also comes from the first word in the Latin version, translated “blessed.” The first part of the song praises God for messianic deliverance (vv. 68-75), and the second part rejoices in John’s significant role in this deliverance (vv. 76-79).

Earlier Mary rejoiced that she was blessed (v. 48). Now Zechariah blessed Yahweh, the God of Israel. When God is the person *blessed*, this word has the virtual meaning of **“praise.”**

Zechariah alluded to God’s promise to raise up a **horn**, symbolic of strength, of salvation from David’s descendants (see Psalm 18:2, 132:17). He was not speaking of John but Jesus. Zechariah knew of Jesus’ coming birth because of Mary’s three-month visit (v. 56).

Verses 76-77 focus on John and his ministry. This description of John clearly links him with Elijah (see Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; 4:5). Even though Luke omitted the conversation about Elijah that followed the Transfiguration (found in Matthew 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13), he undoubtedly recognized John’s role as the fulfilment of **the Elijah prophecies**.

In v. 78-79, we read that God’s loving compassion motivated Him to give salvation. The Greek word *anatole*, translated “visit” or “come,” can describe the rising of a heavenly body or the growing of a plant shoot. This is perhaps a reference to **messianic prophecies** about the star arising out of Jacob (Numbers 24:17) and the shoot growing out of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-2).

1. Has there ever been a time in your life when you didn’t sense God working at all? How did you respond?
2. Why do you think God waited so long to answer Zacharias and Elizabeth’s prayers for a child? What do you do when your prayers go unanswered? How is your relationship with God affected?
3. Why do you think the angel struck Zacharias silent? Wouldn’t it have been better for him to be able to speak about what happened, even if he was uncertain?
4. Why did Zacharias doubt the angel’s word that he would have a son (v. 18)? What difference did he think a sign would make?
5. How can you relate to Zacharias’ reaction? During what situations have you asked God for a sign or wished he would send one your way?
6. What did Zacharias’ hymn foretell about Jesus? About what He would do and accomplish?

Application & Prayer

- What can you do this week to be better prepared spiritually to hear from God or even not hear from God?
- Which of the three points of application from the sermon stand out to you the most personally right now? Why? (As a reminder, they were *1. Be ruled by the Word of God in your life, 2. Reveal the Son of God in your life, and 3. Retell the Story of Salvation*).
- In what disappointment or unexpected circumstance in your life do you long to find the sunrise (v. 78)? How can the church pray for you?
- Reflect on the implications of Luke 1:67-79 for your own life today. Consider what you have learned that might lead you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in His gracious promises.