

# The Tender Mercy of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good. Well, let's turn now to God's Word, shall we? And Josh is opening up to us these early chats of Luke's Gospel. So turn to Luke. If you don't have a Bible with you, we have plenty of visitor Bibles at the side, at the back, so do grab one of the visitor Bibles if you need.

And we're in the second half of Luke, chapter 1. That's page 856 in the visitor Bible, 856. And Luke, chapter 1, I'm reading from verse 57.

Luke, chapter 1, I'm picking up at verse 57. Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day, when it came to circumcise the child, and they would have called him Zachariah after his father, but his mother answered, no, he shall be called John. And they said to her, none of your relatives is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, inquiring whether he wanted him to be called that. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, his name is John. And they all wondered.

And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about throughout the hill country of Judea. 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. And his father, Zachariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, 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.

[ 2 : 47 ] And you, child, will be called the prophets of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, 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 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.

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel. Amen. And may God bless his word to us this morning.

We'll do open your Bibles once again to Luke chapter 1. God's plan for this world, his plan to magnify his own glory, his plan of salvation is cosmic.

It is nothing less than the remaking of a broken world. It is a plan that in the fullness of time will see vast multitudes gathered to worship and reign with Jesus Christ. But however cosmic God's plan is, it is yet still always a plan that involves individuals.

God's glorious and gracious salvation is always worked out for people, for individuals. God's mercy works on not just a macro scale, enveloping a whole world, but his mercy extends also at a micro scale to people, to regular ordinary people, people like you and me, people like Elizabeth and Mary. And we see something of that play out very wonderfully in this passage. We will see quite wonderfully the extent of God's salvation. We'll see how far-reaching and thorough is God's mercy to those who come to him in faith. But we also see that same mercy playing out in a family with individuals.

[ 5 : 09 ] Now we saw last week that Zechariah and Elizabeth were real believers, but they were barren. The desperate longing for a baby that just has not come and will not come is a poignant and potent picture of the longing that God's people knew before the arrival of Gabriel with earth-shattering news.

And it was news that brought real rejoicing and song from Elizabeth and Mary and even from John in the womb. But Zechariah was caught up in doubt, in unbelief, even if it was only momentary unbelief.

His doctrine was being put to the test by real world events. He could take God's word to be the immovable and fixed reality, the source of all truth, or he could go with his eyes how he can see the world. And amidst the glorious good news of Gabriel's announcements, Zechariah is found to waver on God's word. And so this priest was disciplined by God. He was made a mute.

Because it isn't a small thing to call into question whether God really is as good as his word, whether he really means what he says. And so Luke has more for us to see in the story of Zechariah.

Because Luke is historian, yes, but he is also herald. Not just documenting events, but declaring the evangel. And so he wants to show us through Zechariah's story, firstly, the startling mercy of God through a son, in verses 57 to 66. The startling mercy of God through a son. God's ways will always confound the world. His salvation is never boring. His mercy shines through in all manner of ways. Luke picks up the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

[7:13] And Luke does give us this story first before showing us through another song the significance of these events. And so notice verse 57. The time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Now those words on their own wouldn't cause too many people to have a double take. But verse 57 is remarkable. Just notice this. Verse 7. They had no child because Elizabeth was barren, and both were in advanced years. Verse 57. The time has come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. It would be easy to gloss over that detail, but here is a miracle happening.

And the simplicity with which it is recorded here, quite matter-of-factly, shouldn't be a surprise. Here is another example of God's unbreakable word. He doesn't lie. He doesn't change his mind.

And the supposed constraints of nature are not constraints on him. Here were a faithful couple whom God decided to bless. And Zechariah's passing unbelief hasn't put a stop to it. Mary bore a child. And notice once again the reaction. Back in verse 25, Elizabeth's barrenness had been a reproach for her among people. But now verse 58. At God's hand, through God's mercy, reproach turns to rejoicing. Her neighbors and relatives could see that God had indeed been merciful to Elizabeth. But notice Luke is recording the grand scale account of God's mercy unfolding to his people. Unfolding for the world. And here in the midst of the great story is an instance of God being merciful to individuals. That is something to pause and wonder at, isn't it? God's global plans don't pass by his little people. He isn't so busy working out his grand redemption plan that individuals get overlooked. Now I notice that the onlookers aren't just here to see the reversal of Elizabeth's reproach. They are in fact the main players in this event.

The main players are the unnamed neighbors and relatives. They're there in verse 58. The present again, verse 59. Again, verse 61, 62, 63, verse 65, and verse 66.

These unnamed onlookers are there at every stage. They're the main players. And we're getting a glimpse through them into the day that the happy news is finally realized.

[10:08] But Luke wants us to notice it through their interactions, through the crowd's interactions. And so verse 59, circumcision and naming day come. And the expectation from the neighbors, the relatives, is that here is little Zechariah, Zechariah II, Zechariah Jr.

They just assumed that that's what would happen. It's the dumb thing. It was the custom. But then it isn't here, is it? Verse 60, Elizabeth says, no, no, he has a name. His name is John.

And then the nameless onlookers again, verse 61. Oh, right. But none of your relatives are called John. And so with a rising sense of confusion, with custom out the window, they turn to dear old Zechariah, going over Elizabeth's head to try and get some sense from the man of the house.

It seems he must be deaf as well as mute at this stage. They have to make signs. And Zechariah reaches for his writing pads. And verse 63, new frills. His name is John. Full stop. Exclamation mark.

And I keep following the reactions. Verse 63, the unnamed onlookers all wondered. They're wondering even before Zechariah gets his voice back.

[11:31] Maybe there is something about this child. Maybe the rumors of Zechariah's vision are true. Maybe this child is not just answered prayer for this long ravaged couple.

But as it is, here was God's mercy at play once again. Because notice, it wasn't just Elizabeth who received great mercy here. Zechariah does too. Gabriel had said he would be mute.

Gabriel had said Zechariah would be mute until these things come to pass. And so the naming here is not incidental. Gabriel said his name was to be John.

And Zechariah, through his period of discipline, has learned to trust God. To take him at his word.

Do you see? Here was pressure being applied. Oh, come on. You can't call him John.

It's not the done thing. Everyone in the hill country will know you're a weirdo. What about your family? Think about them. They've got expectations. They have a reputation to think of. They've already had to carry the shame of your muteness.

[ 12 : 36 ] All that after not being able to have a child as well. Come on. Do the right thing. It doesn't matter about this vision that you think you've had. The baby's here and I.

Deal with the here and now. I'm sure we can all imagine that kind of pressure. Pressure that, no doubt, we've all heard at points from people who don't share our trust in God and his words. But Zechariah had been humbled by God.

He was disciplined and noticed that his discipline has been a mercy to him. Isn't that often the case? That we learn far, far more about what it is to trust God through enduring difficult things.

Paul tells us that the work God begins in his people he will carry through to completion at the day of Christ. And God is merciful at times to spoil things for us.

Sometimes our hands do need to be emptied in order to cling on ever more tightly to God's promises. And for Zechariah, that did mean that even his ministry had to be taken off him.

[ 13 : 45 ] That was one of the striking things about when all this happened. He was struck dumb when he would ordinarily have been heading out of the temple to bless the people. To proclaim a blessing over them.

But the Lord was mercifully at work to reshape this priest. And here what Luke shows is that Zechariah's humbling brings a wonderful restoration.

Not only does he have the son that he longed for, but verse 64, his tongue is loose and notice he blesses God. Not a begrudging word.

Finally my penance is done. No. Rejoicing that he now knows full well that God is true to his word. And that that word is a word teeming over with blessing and mercy.

It's a genuine word. And also a good word. And so now at long last he joins Mary and Elizabeth in singing and rejoicing.

[ 14 : 47 ] And that is the design of God's discipline. To restore us. To help us see the full extent to which we can trust the surety of God's word. So that we might rejoice in him and in it.

Coming to realize that God is true to his word is a source of joy. His word is not just sure. It's splendid. Well back to the onlookers.

Here's what they've witnessed through this story. They've seen a baby from a barn and old women. They've seen a minister. He's been muted. They've seen decorum discarded around the naming of this child.

And then a priest praising God who hadn't spoken for nine months. The onlookers had rejoiced at the mercy received by Elizabeth. They then questioned his name.

They then wondered at his name. And they're being confronted through all this with the reality that this isn't just a fortunate geriatric pregnancy.

[ 15 : 53 ] But that actually the rumors of the vision Zechariah received have substance. And so verse 65. They fear. All of them fear.

And word spreads throughout all Judea. These events become the talk of the time. So much so that as folks hear about these events they're laying them up in their hearts. Prompting among themselves the question.

What then will this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him. When God gets to work.

He creates a stir. It's worth us noticing that. Whether people conclude rightly about what John would be. The question here is prompted by God's mercy at work in real life.

And people notice it. When God gets to work. When he turns people's lives upside down by drawing people from darkness to light.

[ 16 : 53 ] When he changes completely the course of people's lives through his wondrous grace. It makes an impression. It will cause people to sit up and take notice. The same is true today.

People will take notice as lives are turned upside down. And it may lead to scorn. Or surprise. Or it might even be the means of him finding satisfaction.

Listen to Ralph Davis on this. Doesn't this text tell us something about God himself? Namely that he is so interesting and fascinating.

Of course. Of course. You won't see any section in theology books on the fascination of God. Or run into 30 pages there discussing his unguessable and interesting ways.

I don't see material like this in any systematic theology books I know about. But there's still no excuse for not seeing it in the biblical text. God does things with a little spice.

[17:54] He is not caught in with a conventional. He is not stuck in a rut. Which is why he is so refreshing. But here.

These events. With all their intrigue. What they indicate unmistakably. Is that something significant is happening. This was no ordinary conception and birth. No ordinary circumcision and naming. And this was no ordinary priest. Because God was on the move. I think C.S. Lewis captures something of a sense of wonder in all this.

In his book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Under the reign of the witch. Narnia only knows winter. And it never even gets to Christmas. A long cold winter.

A long cold dark night as it were. But then as the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve arrive. There are little glimpses that something's up. The snow begins to melt.

[18:55] Father Christmas appears. And there are whispers that Aslan is on the move. Luke records this. With all of this intrigue.

To have us asking the question. Alongside these onlookers. Yes, who is this child? What is his significance? Previously we've seen only echoes.

Indications that he'd be fulfilling some prophecies. But what exactly can be expected? And so Luke uses Zechariah's experience to teach us.

To teach us secondly. The supreme mercy of God through the Savior. Verses 67 to 80. The supreme mercy of God through the Savior. In the incarnation.

God stepped into his world. To bring a full orb'd salvation. That includes his own abiding presence with his people. Luke shows us the climax of Zechariah's story.

[19:53] As this priest expounding in detail. Just what God was doing. Mercy. Was received by his wife. Verse 57. But also verse 78.

Verse 58. And also verse 78. Mercy for the Lord's people. The climax of this barren couple's account. Is a glorious prophecy.

About what this child's arrival meant. What then will this child be? And here is Zechariah's answer. But notice.

His answer. Majors on the works of another baby. Not his own. John is mentioned in here.

From verse 76. You. And you child. In reference to his own. But the significance of John's birth. Is that it is like those rumors in Narnia.

[20:53] Aslan's on the move. God is on the move. He is now working out his great salvation. The time has come. Winter is drawing to a close. Now briefly.

Before we get into the message of this song. Do notice verse 67. Zechariah's restoration. Kicks into another gear here. Not only does he praise God. We now see him prophesying.

On behalf of God. He'd lost his voice. But now in his repentance and restoration. He's used to give voice. To God himself. And so in a sense.

Zechariah models repentance to us. Last week. Mary was a model of faith. Behold. I am a servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your words. But here Zechariah is a model.

Of real repentance. He's learned that God's word. Is not to be trifled with. And when the time came to prove it. He listened. And insisted that this baby.

[21:53] Would be called John. Repentance. Is trusting God. So that we turn away from our sin and folly. And notice what the fruit of repentance is.

Verse 64. We've seen he already blesses God. And now verse 67. God's spirit gets to work to use him for kingdom purposes. God's tender mercy to his family.

And to Zechariah leads to a transformed ministry. Here is Zechariah. Once a priest. Now a prophet. Declaring for the people. A word of wondrous good news. Heralding a message from heaven.

After a terribly long silence. A long silence for Israel. Stretching all the way back. To the days of Malachi. But also the end of a long silence for Zechariah.

Repentance opens up avenues to bless the Lord. And bless his people. So let's look at. The message Zechariah proclaims. I think there are key.

[ 22 : 54 ] Three key threads throughout these words. The first. Remembrance. God's great act of salvation. The arrival of the forerunner. John.

And the arrival of the Christ. Are all done. In light of God's remembrance of his covenant. It would seem that Zechariah has learned a great deal from his discipline.

His months of silence were not wasted. He has learned that God's word is unfeeling. Do you see how much a theme that is in these verses? Verse 69.

He has raised up a horn of salvation. In the house of David his servant. He's speaking in covenant language. Salvation is framed by David.

Promises long ago coming to fruition. Then verse 70. This is all happening because God spoke it. By the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.

[ 23 : 49 ] Verse 72. It is all a display of mercy promised to our fathers. And it's to remember his holy covenant. Verse 73.

In accordance with the oath that he swore to our father Abraham. God remembering his covenant is a wonderful thing for his people.

Indeed that is our hope. That's what we sing each time we have communion together. Remember your covenant promises. Remember your covenant people. That's our hope.

That's our hope. And here this wonderful event that had become the talk of the town was an event that was simply the realization of promises that were centuries old.

And Luke records this for us to help us be ever more certain about what Jesus has come to do. And Luke has woven this story of Zechariah throughout the announcement of the coming Savior to help us to grasp all the more fully that God really does keep his promises.

[ 24 : 55 ] Zechariah's doubt gives way to our wonderful declaration. And through all of this we see that God doesn't act on a whim.

He isn't playing catch up. He doesn't fly by the seat of his pants. No. God's word will always come to pass. And in Zechariah we see that we can either accept that as plain as it is.

Or we can learn it the hard way. When God says he will do something. When he promises to do something. It's not merely an intention to do something. If it works out.

If it seems like it might be manageable at the time. No. When God says he will do something. When he makes a promise it's a commitment. The hold into God's very character to actually do what he's promised.

And in the fullness of time all that God has promised will come to be. And the issue that will face all of us is will we? Have we?

[ 25 : 57 ] Do we? Take God at his word? And you know sometimes it isn't going to be obvious to us whether we are or not. I'm not sure it's that common for us to be sitting here thinking.

I don't really think that God is God. That his word is sure. Rather it's often seen or borne out in all kinds of decisions about how we shape our lives.

If God is God and his promises are sure. If all that he has promised will come to pass. If this world will be made new. If there will be a people gloriously drawn to Jesus to be his bride.

What does that mean for my family and its priority? Will it be all about this world? Or will it be all about the world to come? What does it mean for how I will spend my working life?

Building a career to get to the top? Or building with living stones the kingdom of God? What does it mean for my retirement? Will it be used for me or for the Lord?

[ 27 : 02 ] Will it be given to ephemeral things? Or eternal things? A day is coming when everyone who has walked the face of this earth will know for certain that God's word always comes to pass.

But for some, for many perhaps, it will be too late. And so Luke wants Zechariah to be our teacher. Let his discipline serve as a lesson for us too.

Because it's a precious and comforting lesson. To grasp that God has raised up a horn of salvation for us. As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets.

To show mercy promised to our fathers. To remember his covenant. The oath that he swore to our father Abraham. Zechariah declares God's great remembrance.

But he also shows us, secondly, residence. God's great act of salvation. The arrival of the forerunner John and the arrival of the Christ.

[ 28 : 12 ] Bring with him the promise that God will dwell in and with his people. That he takes up residence among us. And within us. Notice here the language that's picked up in verse 68.

Right at the very beginning of the song. And then right at the end again in verse 78. Verse 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. For he has visited and redeemed his people. Verse 78. Because of the tender mercy of our God. Whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high. The hope of the gospel. The wonder of salvation. Is nothing short of God himself. Stepping and stooping down from heaven. Into our world. To not only bring rescue. But to dwell with us. Sin has devastating effects. But we will miss something of the wonder of the gospel. [ 29 : 14 ] If we make it only about rescue from wrath. It is that. Absolutely it's that. And we'll see that in a few moments. But it's far more than that.

You see man has fallen so very far. What we lost in the garden was not simply having no prospect of judgment. We didn't just lose out on blessing. No the fall. Our sin. Means that we're cut off from God. Alienated from him. Cast out from his presence. In the garden.

Adam and Eve knew of the wonder of God. Walking in the midst of the garden with them. As he sat on his throne in heaven. His feet extended into the garden.

His footstool. So that our first father Adam. Knew intimately what it was to be in the presence of God. Wonderfully. That's what's been lost.

[ 30 : 11 ] Not just the delights of the garden. But the dwelling of God with man. But here. Zechariah sings to us. And prophesies for us. That God himself.

Has moved towards his creation. And this visitation. Isn't just a flash in the pan. It isn't the dutiful. Like the dutiful visit of a family member. Who just wants to tick the box.

Of putting in some face time. Despite wanting to get away as quickly as possible. No. This is a visitation. That will be permanent. No more will there be.

A distance between God. And those who belong to him. And nothing will be able to eradicate that closeness again. Indeed this word visited. Has a richer Bible meaning. It means to watch closely.

To be present. To turn your face upon something. Listen to James Philip on this. That's why Christmas is such good news.

[ 31 : 07 ] Communications between heaven and earth. Have been restored. What this means. Is that God. Whose face had been turned away from mankind. Because of sin. Has now once for all.

Been turned towards men. In love and pity. And now his thoughts toward us. Are thoughts of peace. And not evil. Christmas speaks therefore.

Of a reconciled face. That has been turned towards the children of men. The good news of the gospel. The good news of Christmas.

And the incarnation. Is that God means to be present with his people. I don't know about you. But when I consider the depths of my sin.

And the twistedness of my heart. And when I see. At the same time. In the scriptures. The majesty of God. And the beauty of his character. I can far more easily understand.

[ 32 : 04 ] The separation from God. The separation between man and God. That makes sense to me. Far more than God's desire. To be present with his people does.

And yet. He has visited. And redeemed his people. His tender mercy. Is a sunrise. That visits us. To shine light. Into our dark hearts. So that God himself. In the person of his son. Is joined to us. So that right now. We can have real.

And ongoing. Union with God. Union with Christ. And that real. And intimate union. Is ours. As God's own spirit. Is sent to dwell within us. So that he is present.

Permanently with us. And so is also. Shining light within us. To overcome the darkness. That would otherwise. Pour out of us. God's wondrous visitation.

[ 33 : 02 ] Is nothing short. Of an ongoing. Permanent. And indeed. Eternal commitment. To be with his people. And to transform his people.

So Zechariah. She was just God's remembrance. God taking up residence. Finally. Also. She was just redemption. God's salvation.

Is thorough. Dealing with all. That would mark. And stain. And corrupt. And destroy us. Notice that this theme. Is present. Throughout all of Zechariah's prophecy. The saving.

Redeeming words. Verse 68. He has visited. And redeemed. His people. Verse 69. He has raised up. A horn of salvation. For us.

The picture of the horns. A picture of strength. The strongest part. Of an animal. The horn. Verse 71. That we should be. Saved. Verse 74.

[ 34 : 00 ] That we being. Delivered. Verse 77. To give knowledge. Of salvation. Christmas. Brings the good news. Of salvation. Christ's arrival.

Into the world. And the incarnation. Cannot be separated. From redemption. The cradle. And the cross. Go together. And there are two aspects.

Of this redemption. Of which. Zechariah sings. The first. Is rescue from enemies. Rescue from enemies. Verse 71. That we should be.

Saved. From our enemies. And from the hand. Of all who hate us. Verse 74. That we. Being delivered. From the hand. Of our enemies. Now we mustn't be.

Embarrassed. By what this means. This does speak. Of the defeat. Of our ultimate enemy. Namely sin. Satan. And death. But it's more than that. Because this is a deliverance.

[ 34 : 59 ] From the hand of. All who hate us. God's salvation. Isn't. Just some. Ethereal thing. That tends only to our. Our self-actualization.

It isn't some. Internalized reality. That doesn't really interact. With. The world around. No. Jesus promises. To actually. Rescue us.

From all that would harm us. And that includes. Those who would really. And truly. Mean to do us. Great harm. In this world. For belonging to God. And this isn't a new promise.

This is what God has said. All along. Jeremiah said it. Fear not. Oh Jacob. I will save you. From far away. And your offspring. From the land. Of their captivity. Jacob shall return.

And have quiet. And ease. And none. Shall make him afraid. Or from Leviticus. God will give peace. In the land. And you shall lie down. And none.

[ 35 : 53 ] Shall make you afraid. The sword. Shall not go through your land. Jesus arrival. Means that. The beginning of the end. Of all that troubles us.

Is here. There are many tempests. In this world. For those who belong to Jesus. But Jesus promises. To deal with all of them. And these words.

I'm sure. Are a very real. And present comfort. For believers in Manipur. The face of barbaric persecution. Or for our mission partners. In that part of the world.

Who know what it is. To regularly be beaten. And targeted. For belonging to Jesus. And who knows. But the days may not be far off. Where we will cling to these words.

That we'll be saved. From our enemies. From the hand of all. Who hate us. But of course. The wonder of Christmas. Is also that redemption.

[ 36 : 49 ] That rescue. That salvation. Also speaks of the remission of sins. The remission of sins. Jesus deals with the great enemy. By dealing with its root cause. Verse 66.

What then will this child be? What will John be? Well here he is now. In verse 76. John is the prophet of the Moosthai.

This ooze so clearly. Verse 76. John is the prophet of the Moosthai. He'll go before the Lord. To prepare for him. And to give knowledge of salvation to his people. Knowledge of what?

Verse 77. Salvation in the forgiveness of sins. Here is mercy on the macro scale. The tender mercy of God.

For many. And this is a continuation of God's work. To rescue us from our enemies. Because the great enemy. The last enemy. Is death.

[ 37 : 44 ] Death is the shadow. The darkness that hangs over all of us. And it has done ever since the terrible day. When God's curses fell upon Adam and Eve. Death is the last enemy.

And it's a terrible enemy. As we approach Christmas. A time that for many involves gathering around the table as a family. There are few things that hurt.

Few pains as keenly felt in this world. Than the empty chair at the table. A chair that belonged to someone so dear to us. Someone who's been robbed away from us.

By the enemy of death. And that will be a feeling that many of us will be preparing for. Some of us indeed preparing for it very freshly. In a very real and raw way.

And so because of the dark shadow of death. Christmas can be very bittersweet. But the sweetness of Christmas. The joy and wonder. Is seen in Zechariah telling us.

[ 38 : 48 ] That the one his son would be preparing the way for. Is the one who will put all enemies to flight. The one who will sieve us from all of our enemies. Including the great one. The grim one.

Death itself. Verse 79. Jesus Christ. Has come to give light to those who sit in the shadow of death. Paul tells us doesn't he?

That the last enemy. The great enemy is death. That's what he says in 1 Corinthians 15. And death entered this world because of sin. Death in the Bible. Isn't the opposite of existing. It's the reverse of life.

The full life of the garden. And so death is not natural. It's the wages of sin. It's a curse. And so for us to experience a full orb salvation.

That includes the removal of death's dark shadow. We need to have the problem of sin dealt with. And notice verse 77. That's exactly what is going to happen.

[ 39 : 52 ] Jesus has come to bring the forgiveness of sins. To deal with the root cause of death. That is the fitting conclusion to this great prophecy.

Here's the hope of Christmas in a nutshell. It's that verse 79. Our feet. Will be guided. Into the way of peace. No more war.

Because no more enemies. Not. Even. Death. Death. Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death. Where is your victory? O death. Where is your sting? The sting of death is sin. But thanks be to God.

Who gives us the victory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Well look. In order to give us certainty. She was a Zechariah's doubt.

[ 40 : 51 ] Giving way to his declaration. And verse 65. The neighbors were struck with fear. Wondering what this was. But Zechariah sings.

Shouts. Sounds forth. Verse 74. That we need not fear. Because a full orb salvation has come.

Because Jesus has come. He's visited us from on high. Because he promised that he would. And he means to rescue us.

And he means to take residence within us. So blessed be the Lord. God of Israel. Let's pray. Heavenly Father.

We. We marvel. At the majesty of your works. And we ask. That you would grant us your grace.

[ 41 : 54 ] That we would be filled. With an appropriate sense of joy. And wonder. At the Lord Jesus. And as we ask this. We also ask.

That you would grant us all that we need. To serve you without fear. And holiness. And righteousness. For all of our days. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.