

Joy for the helpless - Zechariah's song

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone, and welcome to our service for Christmas Sunday morning. I'm going to read a little from the beginning of Luke's Gospel. Just listen, and then we're going to sing together.

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Abijah, and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

Now, while he was serving as a priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to Zechariah an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

[1 : 0 3] And he was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John, and you will have joy and gladness.

And many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink. And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.

And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

And Zechariah said to the angel, How shall I know this?

For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years. And the angel answered him, I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God. And I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

[2 : 4 3] 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 people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them. And they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple.

And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days, his wife Elizabeth conceived.

And for five months, she kept herself hidden, saying, Thus the Lord has done for me, in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among the people.

Thank you. Do sit and open your Bibles again at Luke chapter 1, page 856. And Kerr Sewell is going to come and read to us the next little bit of the story from verse 57 to 66.

[3 : 47] 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, they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah 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 what he wanted him to be called. 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 through all 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.

[4 : 47] Well, last Sunday evening at our carols by candlelight, we were looking at Mary's song of joy in response to the message that the angel gave to her. Mary believed the word that was spoken.

She trusted that there would be a fulfillment of everything that God had said. In other words, she took God's word seriously. And that led to great joy and great rejoicing for her.

Well, poor old Zechariah, what a contrast he is, isn't he? Verse 20 tells us why he ended up in that sad predicament. He did not believe, says the angel.

He did not believe that God's words to him would be fulfilled in their time. And so poor old Zechariah had to learn the hard way about trusting God's word.

I won't ask you to put your hands up here this morning if that's ever been true of you. Poor Zechariah, he was a good man. Verse 6 of chapter 1 tells us that. He's a man of faith. He's a true Israelite.

[5 : 51] He's walking in God's ways. He's a good man. But somehow, his idea of God isn't big enough. Zechariah's God was too small.

And Zechariah's faith, therefore, had become rather, well, domesticated, we might say. He'd lost sight of the bigness of God. He'd lost sight of the nearness of God. He'd lost sight of the sheer size of God's design on this world.

Now, he's not alone in that because many of us find ourselves like that very often, I think. We tend to live thinking that our story is the story. And that God is in our life.

God is somehow a supporting actor. He's there on the outside. He's called on when we need him. But he's not really in the center of the stage. Isn't that right? Zechariah believed the right things.

He believed in a God of power, a God who would come to deliver his people. But it seems as though Zechariah didn't really believe that anything too much was ever going to happen in his own lifetime.

[6 : 57] And I think it's like that for many people. We recite the creed. We come to church. We say, I believe that he will come to judge the living and the dead.

But I wonder how many of us really expect that. I wonder how many of us long for it. I wonder how many of us live for it day by day. It's quite a question, isn't it? Because, you see, what we see in Zechariah is that you can be very orthodox, very pious, walking blamelessly in all the commands and statutes of the Lord.

There's no criticism in that. That's a way of describing him as a good man, a believing man, a faithful man. We can seem very orthodox, very pious, very faithful.

And yet still apparently be missing out completely on the really big thing. Somehow asleep to what God is really doing out there in the world, in the universe.

What God is doing in this world for eternity. It's possible, isn't it, to be believers, but who don't really get excited about the things that God is excited about.

[8 : 07] And therefore the things that God must want us to be excited about too. And the problem is, you see, that with God, that's not just a disappointment, that's a sin. We might be a bit sympathetic to Zechariah when we read this story, but that would be quite wrong.

God is telling us in this story, don't, don't be sympathetic. Don't be like him either. Look at Zechariah and learn. And that's why we're told that Zechariah was punished.

Verse 22, he's struck absolutely dumb. He can't speak. That is the perfect judgment for someone like Zechariah because he's a priest. His job is to stand up here and teach people about the word of God.

And you see, you can't teach people God's word in a way as to excite other people if you won't believe in it and have faith in it yourself.

And so God switches his microphone off. And obviously that treatment seems to work for Zechariah because in those months of silence, he wasn't able to talk, but he was able to listen.

[9 : 17] He was able to learn from God. And it seems that he was able to learn to take God's word more seriously again. I guess he ruminated on many things, many of those things which no doubt worked their way into the song that he was beginning to sing in his own heart, in the silence.

But then at last, when God did open his mouth again, when he made that public step of faith by naming his son John, Zechariah was at last able to actually give it voice once again with his lips.

We're going to look at that song in a moment. Well, do pick up your Bibles and turn again to Luke chapter 1, page 856, if you have one of our visitors' Bibles.

And we're going to look together in a moment at Zechariah's song. And when we do, I think we can see how Zechariah's own experience of learning the hard way finds expression in his song.

There seem to be two main emphases in his song that seem so very appropriate. First of all, there's a focus on what God says, that all his words have, in fact, been fulfilled.

[10 : 35] And that shows us that Zechariah has learned to trust God, to trust his word, not to doubt him, to take God's word seriously. And then, of course, there's a focus on what God does, that he is a God who must act and who does act to save the helpless.

And Zechariah's own state of helplessness and inability to speak has helped him to see that all help for the helpless must depend upon God and upon him alone.

And that's how he begins his song, verse 67 and verse 68, blessing God for the fact that he has visited and redeemed his people.

The God of promise has fulfilled his promise and the God of deliverance has acted to save his people. Let's read it. It's one of the most beautiful and wonderful songs in the whole Bible.

It paints such a beautiful picture to us of God's salvation. Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord, the 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 the 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.

[12 : 25] 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 shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

It's a wonderful picture in Zechariah's song, isn't it, of a visitation from on high, as verse 78 calls it, like a wonderful sunrise that brings light into the darkness and that banishes every fearful shadow and brings lasting peace.

It's a picture, isn't it, of God turning his face, turning the light of his countenance upon his people. It evokes so many of the pictures that you read in the Old Testament scriptures.

You think of Egypt and the Israelites in slavery and how God looked upon them to deliver them. And Stephen, in his sermon in Acts chapter 7, quotes God as speaking and saying, I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people and I've heard their groaning and I'm come down to deliver them.

It's a visitation of light and warmth and blessing from God. It's a turning of the face of God from on high onto his people on earth. As the carol says, love is smiling from his face.

[14 : 13] Strikes for us now the hour of grace, the Savior since thou art born. And that's what Zechariah says Christmas is all about. It's about the sunrise of the smile of God upon this world that he's created.

And I want us to look at Zechariah's song for a few minutes this morning and see three things that he tells us about this visitation from on high. And the first is very obvious that it is a promised visitation.

And that's the first emphasis in his song if you look at these verses on the prophetic expectation of salvation, that it's now at last been fulfilled. And Zechariah has learned his lesson.

And his message to us is very clear. Our God does have a plan and he keeps his plan. He keeps his promises. He comes as he has promised as the God to redeem his people.

And that's what Zechariah learned in those months of silence. And that's what Luke wants all of us to learn and to grasp this morning. Remember what Luke's purpose is in writing.

[15 : 23] You'll see it in chapter one, verse four, that you might have certainty concerning the things that you've been taught. In other words, that you might believe the message and trust the God who promises.

And again and again in these stories in Luke's gospel, that is the emphasis. It's all about trusting or not trusting the words that God has spoken.

Happened to Elizabeth, just as it was promised. It happened to Mary, just as it was promised. In chapter two, when the shepherds come to Bethlehem, they go on their way rejoicing about everything they'd heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

And the whole of Luke's gospel is all about that. It's about whether people will or won't believe what God has promised. And they see it coming to pass. Look with me, just right to the very end of Luke's gospel for a moment.

Luke chapter 24, page 885 in the church Bibles. The very last chapter. And after Jesus is risen, you remember he's on the road to Emmaus and he's speaking to those two confused men on the road.

[16 : 36] And in chapter 24, verse 24, we read this. They're saying to Jesus, some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the woman had said, but him they did not see.

And Jesus said to them, O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things in the scriptures concerning himself. There's the risen Lord.

And what is his emphasis? To teach them to believe the scriptures, to believe the promises of God. Look at chapter 24, verse 44.

Then he said to him, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything, everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms as the whole Old Testament must be fulfilled.

[17 : 45] Why? Because God has a plan. And God keeps his promises. And therefore, you can trust him. Indeed, therefore, you must trust him because to disbelieve a God who tells us these things so clearly is sin.

And that's what Zechariah learned and why he was punished. And yet, in God's mercy, that chastisement worked a change in Zechariah.

And he learned to trust God's promises. He learned, at last, to rejoice in God's promises. He really got it. And can you see that he shows that he grasped exactly what Jesus was going to teach these disciples later on on the road to Emmaus?

Can you see in his song that Zechariah grasped it right there and then? Because his song proclaims in Jesus the fulfillment of the whole Old Testament, the law and the prophets and the Psalms, just as Jesus said in chapter 24.

Look back to chapter 1 in verse 69. Do you see? Verse 69. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.

[19 : 02] That's in fulfillment of many of the Psalms. Here's just one of them. Psalm 18, verse 1. The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer, my shield and the horn of my salvation.

And now the Lord who is himself the horn of salvation has raised up a son of David, a promised king, the Messiah. As so many of the Psalms speak about.

Then look at verse 70. There's the prophets. He has done it as he spoke by the mouth of the prophets of old. And look at verse 72.

There's Moses, the law of Moses. The message promised to the fathers his holy covenant, his oath to Abraham. That's way back in Genesis, the first of the five books of Moses.

You see, Zechariah has definitely got it. Our God has a plan. He's laid it out and the law and the prophets and the Psalms, the whole of the scriptures.

[20 : 05] And he keeps his promises. Every single one of them. Always, without fail. His promises to the world and about its future.

And his promises about your life and your place in God's future. God is a very great lesson to learn, friends.

To know really and truly that you can trust God and that you can trust that his word is true and right and that it's best and that his ways and that his commands are best for this world and for you and for your life.

And that you can trust that what God says will not let you down. You can trust that God will not forget about you, not ever, ever.

And that is a lesson that we need to learn, that we need to keep on learning, even as Christian believers, that God has not ever messed up in his dealing with your life.

[21 : 11] He's never forgotten to do something that he needed to do. He's never let me down. He's never failed me. No matter what things seem to have happened in my life.

I find the strange thing is that I'm rather like Zechariah. I only ever seem to be able to learn those things the hard way after I've really messed it up and distrusted and disbelieved.

That may just be me. I hope you're different. But I find that sometimes the Lord has had to do what he did to Zechariah, take away precious things from me for a time.

That I would stop talking and learn to listen to him and trust him. But when I have, I've then begun to understand that he is the God of tender mercy.

Isn't that a wonderful phrase that's used there in verse 78? Tender mercy. That may be something that rings true for you as well. The tender mercy of God sometimes may have to work its chastisement on us at times to bring us to be like Zechariah, to really trust in God's word and his promise.

[22 : 29] But Zechariah did and he saw that this was a promised visitation that God was being true to his word. And not only that, he rejoiced when he understood he sang about God's great faithfulness.

Well, let's look again at Zechariah's song there in Luke 1 at verse 67, page 856. Zechariah is very clear in his song that this visitation of God he speaks of was a promised visitation.

God's word had been proved true abundantly and forever. But secondly, he is equally clear what this coming accomplishes.

It's not just that it's a visitation from heaven to earth. Zechariah is very clear in his song this is a powerful visitation.

And Zechariah gives us a profound explanation of what God does when he comes to earth. An explanation of his saving work. And again, his message is crystal clear.

[23 : 44] Our God has power. He not only keeps his promises but he comes and when he comes he comes with power to save. Verse 71 He comes that we should be saved from our enemies.

He comes to bring a great deliverance for helpless people, for oppressed people. Verse 68 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people.

He is a horn of salvation that speaks of power and might. And he comes with the power to save people from their enemies.

Now be careful. We might be tempted to think that Zechariah is thinking here of some sort of political or military deliverance over the occupying powers over the Romans and so on.

Sometimes people speak of these songs and Mary's song too as though that's what they're really speaking of. That can't be. Look at verse 73 and 74. You see the enemies that Zechariah is speaking about here needing deliverance from go all the way back to Abraham's time.

[24 : 57] That's a long, long time before the Romans. In fact, it's a long time before anyone was ever oppressing the nation of Israel. And what is the goal of the deliverance?

Verse 74 The goal is that we may serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness. It's a deliverance from fear and into a life of holiness and righteousness.

That is, into a life of being no longer fearful but being right with God and at peace with God. So it's very obvious, isn't it, in his song that the enemies that Zechariah is talking about are those enemies that hold us in bondage, in bondage to fear.

The enemies that stop us being right with God and serving God in holiness and without fear. He's talking about our spiritual enemies. It's very plain, isn't it?

Because that is what keeps us in bondage and fear. But the Savior comes, says Zechariah, to banish fear, to banish all enemies.

[26 : 07] That's why he says, fear not. That is a great refrain, isn't it? In all the good news, that's what the angel says to Mary, fear not. It's what the angel says to the shepherds in the fields, fear not.

It's what he says here in Zechariah's song, there'll be no more fear. It's another echo of the great prophetic promises from the Old Testament. The prophet Zephaniah says this, when the king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst, you shall never again fear evil.

On that day it shall be said in Jerusalem, fear not, O Zion, the Lord, your God, is in the midst, a mighty one who will save.

He comes with power to save from all the enemies that make us as human beings fear. What is, do you think, the greatest shadow of fear that tyrannizes the people of this world?

The greatest fear that holds us and our lives in bondage, that brings darkness to our life, that makes us feel utterly helpless to do anything about it.

[27 : 18] What do you think? Well, I think it's there in verse 79, don't you think? The darkness of the shadow of death. Death is our greatest enemy as human beings.

Death is the tyrant that robs us of what is most dear and precious in all the world to each one of us. Isn't that right? The people that we love, the people that we cherish, our dearest loved ones, they're taken away from us, aren't they, by death.

And that is why the Bible calls death the great enemy, the last enemy. And we know it, don't we, at this time of year in particular. It's a shadow of death, isn't it, that brings sadness and sorrow, even in the midst of the joy, even in the midst of the celebration and the happiness of family get togethers at Christmas.

Death is the dark shadow in the background. It brings those moments of poignancy and sadness and tears. Many of us will feel that this very Christmas. But Zechariah says that in Jesus Christ, God visits our world with power to destroy our enemies, all of them, even death, and take away fear forever.

Because he deals with a problem right at its source. Why is death such an enemy? Why does it have power to rob us and to destroy?

[28 : 54] Well, the Apostle Paul, later on in the New Testament, tells us very plainly, the sting of death, he says, is sin. That's the disaster that underlies everything, sin.

That is, rebellion against the rightful rule of God, our Creator, who made us, and who's our rightful sovereign. He goes right back to the very beginning of the Bible.

You need to go back all the way to the book of Genesis to read about it. In Genesis chapter 3, when man rebels against God, and God says, on the day you eat, on the day you willfully rebel against my authority, you shall die.

And the Bible tells us that sin entered our world, and as a result, says the Bible, as a result of that rebellion against God, death reigns.

like a tyrant, enslaving all the people of this world. Because as long as our sin is counted against us, then that means that death has a hold of us.

[30 : 07] We're helpless slaves, we live in the fear of death. And friends, that is simply just stating the reality of human life as we knew it. But you see, Zechariah says that in Jesus, God came with power to destroy our enemies and to save us forever from that fear.

He came as the writer to the Hebrews says, that he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

And that's what Zechariah understood. And that's why he's singing. Do you see verse 77? He knows that God is going to help the helpless, to give salvation at last in the forgiveness of their sins.

He comes with power, you see, over all our enemies to destroy death and the causes of death, which is sin. And Paul puts it later on to the church in Colossae.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

[31 : 29] Liberating redemption because sins are forgiven. he comes with power to deliver from all enemies.

And that is the wonder of Christmas. That's the tender mercy of our God in action, releasing captives from their sin and therefore from the penalty of sin, which is death. Isn't it wonderful the picture that Zechariah paints of this in verse 78?

He speaks of it as like a new sunrise for the whole world. It's like the sun coming up in the darkness and changing the world. Again, he's picking up the prophetic word, this time from the prophet Malachi, the very last prophet of the Old Testament.

And Malachi was who spoke specifically about the Elijah figure who would come to prepare the way of the Lord, who Jesus himself said was fulfilled in John the Baptist, Zechariah's own son.

In that day of God's coming, said Malachi the prophet, for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.

[32 : 42] And that's what Zechariah is saying in verse 78, that day has now dawned, the sunrise has visited us from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness, to give light to those who walk in the valley of the shadow of death.

Just like the other prophet Isaiah spoke of that we hear so much at Christmas, the people walking in darkness have seen a great light upon them as the light shined.

It's a visitation with power from on high, with power to save. And that's what Christmas is all about, Zechariah is telling us. That's why Luke wrote it down, so that we would know.

And it was just like a sunrise, it was a silent, imperceptible new beginning of light for all but a few. When the world was sleeping, God's great visitation began.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift was given. But nevertheless, friends, that birth in Bethlehem was the decisive rising of the sun.

[33 : 50] It was the beginning of the climax to all God's plans and promises and purposes for this world. He's a God with a plan.

You can trust His promises. He came. He's a God with power. He can banish fear because He came to save.

Zechariah says, Jesus' coming is like the sunrise of a new day, a new dawn for the world, but not just for the world out there. He's talking also about the world in here, in our hearts.

Because His coming is not just a promised visitation. It's not just something that fulfills the prophetic expectation of salvation. Nor is it just a powerful visitation that gives a great explanation of that salvation.

It is all of this, but most wonderfully of all, perhaps and most pertinently of all for us this morning, is that this coming of God in Christ is very much a personal visitation.

[35 : 01] It's a personal experience of salvation. Because our God is personal. He came, yes He did. He came with power to save, yes.

But He came, friends, with power to save you and me. God's visitation from on high in Jesus Christ is a personal visitation for everyone who will receive Him and everyone who will find in Him the joy of His salvation.

That once for all visitation from on high, notice the words he uses in verse 78, that coming of Christ to banish darkness in the world, that is just the beginning of a vast outpouring from on high that goes on and on and on and is still going on.

A repeat visitation of God by His Spirit into the hearts of all who will do as Zechariah himself did, who will ultimately trust and believe and receive the Christian message.

And that's the triumph of the saving work of our Lord Jesus. At the very end of Luke's gospel, Jesus ascends again to that glory on high and He tells His followers one thing, He says, you will be clothed from on high.

[36 : 27] There will be another glorious visitation fulfilled when the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost. And when you read Acts chapter 1, you'll see how they received power from on high when the Lord Jesus sent His Holy Spirit upon the church.

And from that moment, the great age of God's personal visitation, His visitation of the lives of men and women and boys and girls all over this world, it began and it has never ceased since.

You read on in the book of Acts and you read in Acts chapter 15 how James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, speaks about how God has visited the Gentiles just as at first He visited the Jews.

and He given them His Holy Spirit, cleansed their hearts by faith. He's saying God visited them to give them light in the darkness, to guide their feet into the path of peace.

So He's been doing ever since all over the world. And you see, God visits us, He visits you and me personally in the message of salvation, in the message of forgiveness that's proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[37 : 45] And our God is personal, He brings the sunrise of that light and glory, He brings wherever meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in, in a personal visitation of His tender mercy.

And when He does, His sunrise fills our lives with light. And we come to know Him in the forgiveness of our sins. Don't miss that in verse 77.

I want to burn it into your mind. That's what finding forgiveness really means. It brings us into the knowledge of salvation. It's personal.

Finding that forgiveness means knowing our Savior Himself. And when the Bible speaks about knowing, it always means real and personal intimate knowledge.

To know His forgiveness. by believing and trusting in His word. That is to know Him. It's to know deeply in your own life the tender mercy of our God whereby the sunrise visits us from on high to give light and life to all our future.

[39 : 02] And that's what happens when you put your trust in the message of the gospel, in the message of Christmas, in the message of the good news of Jesus Christ. God Himself visits you where faith receives the gospel word, the breath of life imparts.

He gives His pledge of life. He gives His Holy Spirit into our lives now and forever. And that's the message of Christmas. That's why it's a message today, not just a story about long ago.

it's a promise kept by God for us. And it's a power worked by God for us. But it's also a personal offer held out by God to all who will believe, who will receive.

And it's held out to everyone here this morning. An offer of the knowledge of God and His salvation and the forgiveness of your sins, no matter how dark and how deep, and how manifold those sins have been.

And to know that, friends, you see, is to know Him. And that is to know the beauty and the wonder of a sunrise that will plunge your life into the light of glory.

[40 : 20] It's to know what it means for the darkness to be banished, for every enemy, every fear, even the fear of our last enemy, physical death itself, to be put away forever.

And Zechariah tells us in verse 76 that the task of John, his son, was to be a prophet, to go before the Savior and to proclaim the way to people.

In a sense, our task is just the same, isn't it? It's just as wonderful, indeed, perhaps it's more wonderful, people. Because like John, we are able to proclaim that there is joy for the helpless, there is joy for fearful people in the light of Jesus Christ the Savior.

And we know that everything that was spoken to Zechariah and through John was fulfilled in the death and in the rising again and in the ascension to glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and shall be fulfilled at last when he comes again.

And the message of Christmas today is simply this, come to the sunrise. Come to his sunrise and rejoice in the light of his joy this Christmas.

[41 : 43] And you will know the tender mercy of our God. And you will know even now, even in this dark world with all its problems, with all its fallenness, with all its sin, you will know the peace that only he can bring.

Amen. Well, let's pray together. Heavenly Father, how marvelous it is that you should come as one of us, flesh of our flesh, owning our human nature, to atone for the guilt of our sin, so that through your tender mercy, we who walked in darkness might know the light of your grace and the promise of your future.

Help us, we pray, to walk in the light this Christmas time, for the glory of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.