

Promise and Fulfillment

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

In Jesus' name we pray. In those days, Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

[1 : 41] For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed. For he who is mighty has done great things for me.

And holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the mighty from their thrones. And exalted those of humble estate. He has filled the hungry with good things.

And the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy. As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his offspring forever.

And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home. 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.

[2 : 42] 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.

And his father Zechariah 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.

[4 : 15] 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, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The child grew and became strong in spirit. He was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel. This is the word of the Lord.

One of my favorite children's books is entitled *The Carrot Seed*. If any of you have read it, if some of you have kids, it goes like this, it's a very short book, it says, A little boy planted a carrot seed.

His mother said, I'm afraid it won't come up. His father said, I'm afraid it won't come up. And his big brother said, It won't come up.

Every day the little boy pulled up the weeds around the seed and sprinkled the ground with water.

But nothing came up. And nothing came up. Everyone kept saying it wouldn't come up.

[5 : 37] But he still pulled up the weeds around it every day and sprinkled the ground with water.

And then, one day, a carrot came up.

Just as the little boy had known it would. It's a simple story about childlike faith. About perseverance.

I don't know if the author is Christian, but it's really something that should characterize the Christian life. Childlike faith. Perseverance. Because we are called as God's people to live by faith.

And not by sight. And this can be difficult, especially when what we see around us don't match up with what we believe. Yet, even when we are surrounded by naysayers, those who keep the faith will be rewarded and proven right in the end.

And this passage serves to provide evidence of that. Assurance of the fact that those who humbly trust in the Lord will rejoice in the end for God's mercy.

[6 : 47] That those who humbly trust in the Lord will rejoice in the end for God's mercy. And so the first part we see in verses 39 to 56, Mary's faith and rejoicing.

And in the second part we see Zechariah's faith and rejoicing. And we saw last week that Gabriel, the angel, gave announcements to Elizabeth and Mary. And after hearing from Gabriel that Elizabeth, her formerly barren relative, is now pregnant and that this is the sign for Mary that she will bear a son as a virgin named Jesus.

Mary departs immediately to visit Elizabeth. It says in verses 39 to 40, follow along with me, In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country to a town in Judah.

And she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. So her hasty departure, so she's not hesitating, she's not delaying, she goes immediately because she believes the word of the Lord and this is her response of obedience to God's announcement through his angel.

And as she departs for Elizabeth, it doesn't take long for Mary to receive confirmation about the sign that Gabriel had given her. Because it says in verses 41 to 45, And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leapt in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

[8 : 09] And she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

So this is a fulfillment of what Gabriel announced in verses 15 to 17 of this same chapter, that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.

So this is a fulfillment of that. And he also announced that he will go, John will go before Jesus in the spirit and power of Elijah to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

And what we're seeing now here is that even in the womb, baby John is filled with the Holy Spirit, and he goes before Jesus and announces his coming. He's alerting his mother, here is the Lord, here is Jesus.

[9 : 12] And Elizabeth, having been alerted by her baby in her womb in this manner, is filled with the Holy Spirit herself and begins to bless Mary and the baby Jesus in her womb. And even though she is significantly senior to Mary, and she humbles herself before Mary and expresses her sense of grateful disbelief.

Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? The word Lord could simply refer to a human superior, but since just three verses later, Mary says, my soul magnifies the Lord, and that's in reference to God, it's hard not to see a reference to the divinity of Christ here, that Jesus is indeed God.

He is the Son of God. He is the divine Lord, the King above all kings, the very Son of God, and because of that, this is the proper posture of Elizabeth.

This is the proper posture for subjects who are paid a visit by their king. I don't know if you've ever met a celebrity in your life, or if you've seen someone else meet a celebrity, which is even funnier, right?

It's a very interesting human phenomenon, right? Because in our culture, we view celebrities like this, this larger-than-life, kind of superhuman kind of figure, right? And some people just start jumping around and screaming because they can't help themselves, they can't handle themselves. [10:36] And then other people freeze completely, they're starstruck, and are at a loss for words, right? And if that's how we react to other humans, however famous they may be, how much more when we are visited by the Lord God, the creator of the universe, the savior of the world, as Christians, we need to recover a little bit of a sense of that reverence and awe before God.

Do we walk into a worship service like we are entering into the throne room of the king? Or are we casual, lackadaisical, bored?

Do we open up our Bibles with humble submission as if the king is about to speak? Or do we read it with less interest and enthusiasm than we have for our emails?

Do you recognize the staggering reality that we as God's people are indwelt by the very spirit of God? Do we live every moment of our lives as if we are before the very face of God?

Why is this granted to me that my Lord should come to me? That's a great question that we need to ask more often.

[12:07] If we did, we'd become more grateful and humble people. After explaining that the baby in the womb left for joy at the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth says in verse 45, Mary is blessed because she believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

So notice how she phrases it. Instead of saying, blessed are you, which is the more natural way to speak when you're speaking to the person that's in front of you, she says, blessed is she, referring to Mary in the third person.

And this is a way to kind of generalize the statement to make Mary a model of faith for everyone, every future believer that should be emulating Mary.

She's basically saying, blessed is anyone who believes that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken from the Lord. There is a blessedness, a happiness that characterizes the life of faith.

And the reason for that is because faith is the way by which we appropriate and experience God's grace. Romans 8.1 says, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[13:27] And this is an objectively true statement. But when you are feeling overwhelmed by seemingly insurmountable sin in your life, when you feel weighed down with guilt, you have to believe that in order to experience subjectively that truth that there is no condemnation for you in Christ.

Similarly, Ephesians 1.20-21 says, Christ is seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

That is objectively true. But when you are full of fear and anxiety, you have to believe it in order to experience the comfort and peace and freedom that comes from the sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3.7-9 says that everything is rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus. But when you are tempted by the wealth of this world, the fame of this world, you have to believe God's word in order to resist the pull of worldly treasures and to cherish Christ above all. That's the blessedness of faith. To believe is to be blessed, to be happy, to be fortunate. And Mary was blessed because she believed that there would be a fulfillment of the word of the Lord.

[15:00] And because of her faith, she was able to obey in anticipation of that fulfillment and as a result, experience the joy and satisfaction and fulfillment that comes from that.

Those who humbly trust in the Lord will rejoice in the end for His mercy. And that's what we see in Mary's hymn of praise in verses 46-56. Mary begins the hymn with two parallel poetic lines in verses 46-47.

She says, My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. To magnify means to make large or to make great, to make much of something or someone, to praise someone.

And Mary magnifies the Lord not like a microscope that makes something really small appear larger than they really are, but more like a telescope that takes something that is huge, like a faraway star, appear as they really are.

in their true size. She magnifies God. What she's doing as she does that is she's appreciating God as He really is in His bigness, in His majesty, in His glory.

[16:11] So we praise His greatness not to make God appear great, but because He is great. So that's what Mary is doing. She magnifies the Lord. And the parallel line says, My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

This is so helpful. The fact that the words magnify and the word rejoice are in parallel construction is illuminating because magnifying God consists in rejoicing in Him.

You guys follow what I'm saying? Glorifying God consists in delighting in Him. Praising God consists in enjoying God.

This is the insight that C.S. Lewis arrived at in his book Reflections on the Psalms. He writes, I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment.

It is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are. The delight is incomplete till it is expressed.

[17:25] When we see a splendid sunset and we exclaim with a sigh of longing, Oh, that's so beautiful. We don't say that to compliment the sunset.

We say that because that is the way in which we delight in it and enjoy the sunset by praising it, by exclaiming about it. In the same way, that's what it means to praise God, to magnify the Lord. It means to enjoy Him and to rejoice in Him. And that's why the book of Revelation describes heaven as a place where God's people are forever praising Him.

And some people read that description in Revelation and think to themselves, Oh, heaven must be insufferably boring. Forever? Forever? Far? Go far from it.

Heaven is where we delight in God. We enjoy Him forever. It is where His love for us and our love for Him are experienced in infinite fullness without any hindrance to prevent us.

[18:34] Heaven is a world of joy. It's a world of love as Jonathan Edwards, a theologian, calls it. And compared to that, the mutual enjoyment and ecstasy between even a husband and wife is a pale shadow.

There dwells God the Father who in love chose us before the foundation of the world and predestined us for adoption to Himself. Ephesians 1.45 There dwells God the Father who so loved us that He gave His only Son that we might believe in Him and not perish but have eternal life.

That's where He dwells. There dwells God the Son who showed us the greatest love there is by laying down His own life for His friends by dying on the cross for our sins.

There dwells the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit who has poured out God's love into our hearts as it says in Romans 5.5 That's heaven. That's where we praise God forever.

And so Jonathan Edwards as he says in his sermon Heaven a world full of love There in heaven this fountain of love this eternal three in one is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it.

[19:49] There this glorious God is manifested and shines forth in full glory in beams of love There the fountain overflows in streams and rivers of love and delight.

enough for all to drink at and to swim in yea so as to overflow the world as it were with a deluge a flood of love That's the sure hope of the Christian.

Those who say that praising God is boring betray their only impoverished understanding of God their own anemic appreciation of God to glorify God is to enjoy Him to magnify God is to rejoice in Him and then in verses 48 to 50 Mary gives the reasons why she magnifies and rejoices in the Lord and the first reason is in verse 48 for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant for behold from now on all generations will call me blessed well here in chapter 1 verse 38 Mary said behold I am the servant of the Lord let it be to me according to your word and Mary once again here describes herself as God's servant the word is is a reference to a bond servant a slave Mary acknowledged that her estate is humble she is lowly and yet God from on high has looked on her and has made her the mother of Jesus Christ the Savior of the world and for this she says all generations will call me blessed and verse 48 is paralleled by verses 49 to 50 it says for He who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is His name and His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation verse 49 is a flip side of verse 48 48 focuses on Mary's poverty her impoverishment and verse 49 focuses on God's lavishness His generosity verse 48 focuses on Mary's weakness verse 49 focuses on God's might verse 48 focuses on Mary's lowliness and verse 49 focuses on the greatness of what God has done for her anyway even

though Mary was undeserving and lowly God has bestowed on her unprecedented honor from on high and likewise the end of verse 48 is paralleled by verse 50 from now on all generations will call me blessed because God's mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation because God is merciful to those who fear

Him to those who humble themselves before Him Mary as the recipient of God's mercy will be called blessed by all generations and the phrase from now on is an important Lukean phrase it indicates a significant change that took place when Jesus came to earth the change that took place in God's redemption plan so that from now on nothing is the same and so for the world and for Mary nothing will be the same again now Mary will be called blessed forever and if God is merciful to the humble then the converse the opposite of that statement is also true and that's what Mary turns to next in verses 51 to 53 he has shown strength with his arm he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty this is echoing what we see repeatedly throughout the entire years that God's consistent mode of operation is to oppose the proud but give grace to the humble and that's what Mary sees God doing through the conception of Jesus

[23 : 53] Christ the God who is mighty has brought down the mighty from their thrones and instead has exalted those of humble estate so it's not King Herod who will get the last laugh as a Davidic Messiah wannabe it's not the Roman Emperor Augustus who will prevail in the end but it will be King Jesus born from the womb of lowly Mary who will triumph and establish the kingdom of God the oppressors will be scattered and the oppressed people of God will be gathered around the throne of Jesus and this reality is so certain that even though it hasn't happened yet Mary uses the past tense to describe it it's what grammarians call the prophetic past it's so certain to happen that even though it lies in the future they use the past tense to describe as if it had already happened as if it has already happened because that's how certain it is Paul speaks of this reality too doesn't he about how God gives grace to the humble in 1 Corinthians 1 27-29

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God those who claim to be wise in this world and then reject the word of God will not be saved but only those who profess their ignorance submit to God's wisdom those who claim to be strong and deny their need for God will not be saved but only those who acknowledge their weakness and cry out to God for help those who claim to be high and noble and powerful and spurn God as their Lord will not be saved but only those who humble themselves before God and serve him as their Lord and by choosing to save us through Jesus in this way Jesus who ascended to his throne and established his kingdom by redeeming people for himself by dying on the cross

God destroys all human pride and pretension we cannot save ourselves that's why Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 12 9 I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me some of you are in a season of being humbled by God if God's humbling you right now if you feel like you're being laid low by God maybe it's failing in school maybe it's being disrespected by your peers maybe it's being unemployed maybe it's the weight of sin that makes you feel undeserving of God's salvation if God's making you feel weak right now don't let that drive you to despair let that drive you to Christ and boast in your weakness because there you will find the power of

Christ rest on God brings down the mighty from their thrones and exalts those of humble estate a Puritan prayer puts it beautifully this way as water rests not on barren hill summits but flows down to fertilize lowest veils make me the lowest of the Lord my spiritual riches may exceedingly abound gives grace to the whole and Mary concludes her hymn by recalling the promises that God had made to her forefathers in verses 54 to 55 he has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers to Abraham and to his offspring forever God remembered his mercy toward his people he remembered the commitment that he had made toward his people it's a sad thing to be forgotten isn't it whether it's your best friend that forgets your birthday or your spouse that forgets your anniversary or your aging grandparent forgets your name or a grandparent that gets forgotten and neglected even when they pass no one knows

Israel has for many years now felt forgotten and forsaken by God and yet God has proven decisively through Jesus that he remembers them he has remembered them and has intervened on

their behalf in mercy and as Jesus served to remind Mary of God's remembering his mercy let Jesus and his gracious saving acts remind you also of the fact that God has and continues to remember you Satan our enemy will accuse you and lie to you saying that you are forgotten by God that's why these things are happening to you you're forsaken he doesn't care but let Christ stand guard over your mind and guard over your heart and dispel those lies because God remembers his mercy toward you and Jesus and his life and his death and his resurrection is the proof of that once and for all those who humbly trust in the Lord will rejoice in the end for his mercy that's

[29 : 36] Mary's faith and rejoicing and then she returns home after spending three months with Elizabeth shortly before John's birth and in verses 57 to 80 the focus shifts back to John's parents and we see Zechariah's faith and rejoicing verses 57 to 58 am I not coming out of the mic anymore verses 57 to 58 tell us of John's birth it says 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 so this is further fulfillment of the angel's announcement in chapter 1 verses 13 to 17 the angel's word that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb was fulfilled when he left with joy at the greeting of Mary and now the angel's word that Elizabeth would bear a son is fulfilled in exactly those words and the promise that you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth from verse 14 is also fulfilled because now people are rejoicing along with Elizabeth and Zechariah and so

Elizabeth does bear a son many rejoice with her and joy is really a running theme throughout this passage that recount the birth of John and Jesus and now that John's been born the announcement that the angel's been fulfilled it's not time for Zechariah and Elizabeth to obey God because the angel had also commanded them in verse 13 you shall call his name John now verses 59 to 66 tell us about John's naming remember in verse 6 that Zechariah and Elizabeth were both righteous and blameless in obeying God's commandments and so they followed God's commandments to circumcise the baby on the eighth day as it says in verse 59 and then their relatives who were there for the birth and the circumcision want to name the child Zechariah after his father which was customary to do in this culture but Elizabeth likely having conferred with Zechariah already answers them in verse 60 no he shall he shall be called John but they protest these are stubborn relatives none of your relatives is called by this name what are you thinking it was customary among the Jews to name children after their relatives so they take it up with Zechariah perhaps thinking to themselves that Elizabeth is going rogue and hadn't consulted her husband and perhaps thinking to themselves well surely Zechariah would want us to name his only son after him so they it says that they made signs to his father inquiring what he wanted him to be called so based on this verse I suggested to you last week that Zechariah must have been struck a death not merely mute because they're making signs to him instead of asking him the question that's what a majority of the Bible scholars think but as I was studying this passage I think I was wrong so I want to retract that from last week I think what's happening is because the word to make sign can also mean to motion or to nod or to gesture towards someone using your body and so because this passage only speaks of him losing his speech it doesn't specifically mention him losing his hearing also

I think it's more likely that he's just unable to speak so he's hearing all this conversation and Elizabeth is talking they're asking Elizabeth hey what should we name him Elizabeth says his name shall be John so Zechariah is hearing all this but they want his confirmation so they gesture to him hey so what do you think so he's I think that's what is going on and so because he can't speak they bring him a writing tablet so he can write his response and he says his name is John right he doesn't say his name shall be John he says his name is John different from the way Elizabeth phrased it that's his name because God says so that's the name that God commanded me to give him that's the name that the angel announced so it's not a matter what I shall name him his name is John whether I like it or not I don't have any choice in this matter so this shows John's submission and obedience to God in that period of being struck with muteness Zechariah has learned to trust God and the agreement of

Zechariah and Elizabeth on this unusual name fills the crowd with wonder he says and then immediately Zechariah's mouth was opened and his tongue loosed and he spoke blessing God now that the word God's word has been fulfilled a sign of muteness that God had given to Zechariah is also fulfilled and comes to an end so that Zechariah is able to speak and then verse 65 tells us that as a result of that fear came on all their neighbors so we're told of three different reactions of the relatives and neighbors in this passage right verse 58 told us that they rejoiced that a son was born

to an old formerly barren couple verse 63 they wondered at John's untraditional name and the fact that Zechariah and Elizabeth agreed on that and then in verse 65 they are filled with reverential fear that after seeing Zechariah speak again miracle of restored speech so these three things all point to the fact that John is not an ordinary child this new baby becomes the talk of the town and the entire region and the people leave Elizabeth and Zechariah's home saying to themselves what then will this child be for the hand of the

[35 : 15] Lord was with him and just as the fulfillment of God's promise to Mary in verses 39 to 45 was accompanied in Mary's by Mary's hymn of praise now the fulfillment of God's promise to Zechariah here is also accompanied by Zechariah's hymn this is probably what he spontaneously burst out with when his speech was restored and he says he blessed God because that's the first thing he says and this came in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit verse 67 tells that Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied it's a prophetic hymn inspired by the Spirit and the hymn has two sections in verses 68 to 75 Zechariah speaks of what God has done and then in the rest of it 76 to 79 he speaks of what his son John will do so what God has done is described in verses 68 to 69 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 what God does for his people here is described in terms of three words visitation redemption and salvation first God has visited his people the word visit is an important word for Luke he uses it repeatedly throughout the gospel and also in the book of

Acts which he also wrote and it always conveys God's gracious intervention on behalf of his people and in this passage is repeated again in verse 78 later to refer to the coming of the Messiah so the way God visits his people is through Jesus the promised messianic king from the line of David the visitation of God happens through the incarnation of Jesus Christ Jesus becoming a human taking on human flesh and living among us that's why Jesus is called Emmanuel which means God with us in Christ who came we have God with us in the spirit of God who indwells us we have God with us we have been visited by the God of salvation God of all creation and the second God has redeemed his people redemption conveys the idea of purchasing the rights of a slave commenting on the Exodus Moses says in Deuteronomy 15 15 you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you so then the redemption of Israel from Egypt meant that they were no longer slaves to Pharaoh but slaves to the Lord they had been freed and no longer enslaved to a fellow man but to their creator as they were intended to be that's the meaning of redemption God's people would no longer be enslaved to their enemies or oppressors but they will be slaves of the gracious Lord God servants of God that's why the purpose of God's redemption is given this way in verses 74 to 75 read with me that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days that's what Jesus did for us first Peter 1 18 to 19 says that Christians have been ransomed with the precious blood of Christ the blood of Christ his death his life given for us is the ransom the redemption price that God paid for us we were all once slaves of sin as Romans 6 says but because Jesus paid the penalty of our sin and redeemed us from by dying on the cross in our place we are not free to serve God and that's why 1st Corinthians 7 23 says you were bought with the price do not become bond servants of men we have been delivered from the hand of our enemies that we might serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days so are you serving God with your life and if not God whom are you serving where does your ultimate allegiance lie are you serving yourself are you a workaholic enslaved to your boss are you serving your city is that where your primary ultimate allegiance is because to serve God is what Christ redeemed you for paid for with his own blood so if you're a Christian that's where your ultimate allegiance lies you are not your own you were bought with a price so glorify God and then third so that second is redemption third idea is salvation verse 69 says that God has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David the horn of salvation comes from the image of a horned ox that gores its enemies into submission right this expression is used in second Samuel 22 3 and Psalm 18 2 to refer to God himself so this too is to imply the divinity of the son of God the Jesus and by dying on the cross for us and then being raised from the dead Jesus defeats sin and death and subdues all the spiritual forces of evil so that they no longer have any claim on those who have been united to Christ by faith and not only are spiritual enemies but also the physical enemies of God's people as well will be subdued by the Lord open doors is is a is a Christian foundation that serves Christians in persecuted areas throughout the world and they

published a report at the beginning of this year summarizing last year's finding and research and it states that one in 12 Christians that's about 215 million total live in an area where they face high level of persecution for their faith in 2017 3066

Christians were killed 1252 were abducted nearly 800 church buildings were defaced and 1020 Christians were raped or sexually harassed for their faith just a few days ago a hundred underground Christians in China were arrested and it's estimated that about hundred thousand Christians have already been arrested so far this year in China all because they pledged their ultimate allegiance not to any earthly ruler but to Christ their king all those who have hated and oppressed God's people will be defeated by the horn of salvation at Jesus second coming those who humbly trust in the Lord will return in the end for his mercy and then in verses 76 to 79 Zechariah turns his attention to what his son John will do he says 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 so

[42 : 50] John's subordinate supportive role to Jesus is clearly laid out here because in verse 32 Jesus was described as the son of the most high but John is the prophet of the most high Jesus was called Lord in verse 42 and John is the one who prepares the way for the Lord and Jesus is the horn of salvation as I said in 69 John is the one who gives knowledge of salvation he will point to Jesus that they might receive forgiveness of their sins and then in verses 70 to 79 Zechariah recounts once more why God's salvation has come 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 the sunrise that will visit us is another reference to Jesus who says in John 8 verse 12 I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life without light we would be groping around in the darkness unable to find our way but

Jesus has come to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace Jesus is the light that illuminates our darkened minds he's the light that dispels the darkness hidden in our hearts and the reason why the light of the world comes to us is summarized in this one word here in verse 78 God's mercy God's tender compassionate mercy this is now the fifth time that the word mercy has been used in this passage alone it's the key word of this passage in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament the word mercy most often translates the Hebrew word that means steadfast love God's loving kindness love for people who do not know the not deserve it the overflow of God's

God's kindness that finds its basis not in the worthiness of the recipients but in the bondfulness the generosity of the Giver so let me ask me ask you a question on judgment day of God's heavenly court what would you say to him plead not guilty most non-Christians in Cambridge will say well I'm a pretty good person I live a moral life unlike so many people in the world that's foolishness because God's standard is perfect and every one of us has fallen short of his perfect standard and the prosecutor Satan the accuser has a perfect record against anyone who tries to stand on his or her own righteousness and pleads not guilty our only hope is mercy of God if you are not yet a follower of Jesus Christ stop pleading not guilty instead plead for his mercy and if you are already a follower of Jesus Christ don't let your sins drive you to despair instead let your sins drive you to Christ our Savior and when we plead his mercy and fling ourselves into the arms of Jesus Christ who is our intercessor he's our advocate he's our defender and God will then count Christ's righteousness as our own so that instead of wrath instead of wrath instead of the darkness instead of being cut off from the presence of God forever instead of being deprived of every good gift that comes only from him instead of that which is what we deserve instead of wrath we receive his mercy that's the good news of Jesus Christ that's the good news of Jesus Christ God we do humbly trust in the Lord will rejoice for his mercy as you as as as as as as