



ADVENT SERIES: "GOD WITH US"

THE ANTICIPATED GOD • LUKE 1:67-79 • 12.19.21

MAIN POINT

God is to be praised because of His faithfulness to His promise to send a Savior, giving the gift of salvation.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Describe a time when you were rescued from something. What were the circumstances? How did your feelings change when your rescuer arrived?

Zechariah had been visited by the angel Gabriel, who told him that his wife, Elizabeth, would conceive a son. When Zechariah learned about his son's identity and purpose, he erupted into praise in light of God's great faithfulness and the sense that His salvation was at hand. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Zechariah prophesied the role of his son in making clear the way of the Savior.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ LUKE 1:67-75.

Zechariah's Holy Spirit-empowered prophesying traced the promises of God for the redemption of His people from God's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, through the prophecies of the prophets. Rescue in Zechariah's prophecy existed on two planes: the temporal and the eternal. In the temporal plane, or our physical world, God was a constant protector and provider for His people, even when their sinfulness made them unworthy of it. On the spiritual plane, however, even greater rescue was underway. Ultimately, the clutches of the enemy God's people would be rescued from are those of the principalities of spiritual darkness.

When you think about your life and how God has walked with you, where are some critical junctures at which God showed Himself faithful? Was it easier to perceive those moments of faithfulness when they happened, or as you look back on them after some time had passed?

How does it make you feel to read about God remembering His covenant throughout numerous generations? What promises in His Word do you remember most often? How does His faithfulness, recorded in Zechariah's prophecy, relate to you?

READ LUKE 1:76-77.

Zechariah prophesied over his newly born son that he would be a prophet of the Most High. This description spoke to John the Baptist's role as the precursor of the

Messiah (Luke 1:13-17). Jesus and John are forever intertwined in Zechariah's prophecy. Specifically, John would "give His people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1:77). Part of the role of preparing the way for Jesus was John's preaching repentance and forgiveness of sin so that the people understood salvation.

God had specifically set John aside to point people to the Savior. How do you think God has specifically gifted and created you for that same purpose?

Sometimes the magnificence of the events in Scripture can make us feel like those things could never happen today. How do you personally avoid that temptation? How do you remain mindful that the same God who empowered Zechariah also empowers you? Why is it important to do so?

READ LUKE 1:78-79.

Finally, it was clear that the ultimate result of God's merciful compassion was the coming of Jesus. The brilliance of Jesus' light would shine on those living in darkness and the shadow of death. The way of peace contrasts that of darkness. "Peace" carries the idea of God's rest and justice. Peace is not the absence of conflict, but an existence under the reign of a merciful, compassionate God.

At times, we can feel the weight of our sin so heavily, it feels grievous to even mention in prayer. How does remembering that Jesus experienced temptation of every kind battle that faulty idea?

When you read the phrase, "live in darkness," what images does that conjure up in your mind? How do you battle living in darkness daily?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Pause and prayerfully think through the interactions you've had this week at work, school, and home. What evidences of brokenness is the Spirit reminding you of in those interactions? How can you be a messenger of light this week to one of those people?

How can you be a part of our church's ministry to our community? Why is it important to participate in biblical community this way?

PRAYER

Pray that God would make your group mindful of all the ways God has shown Himself faithful, as revealed in Zechariah's prophecy. Pray that the Holy Spirit would invigorate those in your group to move toward those living in darkness this week.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 1:67-79

1:67. God had one more word for the pondering people. The Spirit promised for the son (v. 15) and pledged to come to Mary (v. 35) now spoke through Zechariah as he had through Elizabeth (v. 41). Thus, Zechariah's song of praise, reflective of so much

of Mary's song (vv. 46-55), was more than human singing. It was divine prophecy, declaring God's word for God's people.

1:68-75. Praise and adoration belong to God alone. As he redeemed Israel from Egyptian slavery (Exod. 15:13; Deut. 13:5; Ps. 77:15; 111:9), so through the forerunner and the Savior he would again pay the price for his people's salvation. He will accomplish this through the Messiah whom everyone expected—the king anointed from a horn of oil and given divine strength like the strength of the great horned deer and oxen (1 Sam. 2:1,10; 2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 89:17). The prophets said he would do this. Just think of Isaiah 9 and 11 and Jeremiah 23. The promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 is coming to pass.

Just look what will happen: Victory over our enemies. Everyone who hates us is doomed. The oppression and persecution we have suffered so long from the nations is past history. A new day has dawned. Why? Because God is faithful. He did not forget the covenant of mercy he made with our fathers. He promised Abraham a great nation. We will see that happen. Free from enemies, we can devote our lives to serve God without fear or hindrance. That means we will be a different people. We will be holy, set apart to serve and obey him, different from all other peoples on earth. We will be righteous, fulfilling the covenant promises we made to God just as he fulfilled his promises to us.

1:76-79. These wonderful hopes can come true through the little baby Zechariah held in his hands. This helpless, miraculous baby will be God's first prophet since Malachi over four hundred years before. He will not be the Messiah. He will be the one who prepares the way. He is the forerunner whom Malachi promised (see Mal. 3:1). He will let people know what God is up to. He will show them they can have salvation by letting God forgive their sins. Then they can be righteous keepers of the covenant.

Zechariah continued his song of praise: This is not to say how great this son of mine will be. This is to say how wonderful God is. This is all due to his mercy. God wants to send the rising sun of righteousness Malachi said would come (Mal. 4:2). For too long God's people have lived in the darkness of foreign governments, the darkness of economic oppression, the darkness of our own sins. We have experienced living death all these years. Now God is changing all that. God will let his sun shine on us. His pathway for us will become clear. No longer will we have to plot war and subversion against the enemy nations. We will know his perfect peace.