

A SIMPLE CHRISTMAS: ADVENT 3 (Joy)

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Luke 1:57-80

⁵⁷Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' ⁶¹They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' ⁶²Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵Fear came over all their neighbours, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

⁶⁷Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹He has raised up a mighty saviour* for us in the house of his servant David,

⁷⁰as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

⁷¹that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

⁷²Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant,

⁷³the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

⁷⁸By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon* us,

⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

⁸⁰The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

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REFLECT & DISCUSS

Context

After the song of Mary, the story returns to Elizabeth and Zechariah. Zechariah regains his voice and erupts in song. The first songs of Christmas are found in the mouths of Mary and Zechariah. They don't just say their piece, they sing their praise.

The life of John will be inextricably linked to the life of Jesus. He is born in the context of Christ's mission, and John's very birth echoes with the birth that is to come.

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. Have you ever looked into the eyes of a newborn and wondered, "what then will this child become?" What do you think Elizabeth and Zechariah were feeling, wondering about, hoping for with their son?
3. What might it be like to release your child into a mission that might be dangerous and you might not fully understand? How is that true for every parent?
4. How can our lives "prepare the way" for the Lord?
5. What are some of your favorite Christmas songs or hymns? Why do you love them so? How is song a unique way to capture the meaning and joy of Christmas?

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