

Zechariah's Song

David Carter / General Adult

Christmas Songs of Salvation / Luke 1:57-79

I remember when I was kid, it felt like the whole kid calendar was built around Christmas. Like everyday was measured in how many days left until Christmas.

You remember that? Even in January, while you were still basking in the glow of the Christmas that just passed, it was bubbling inside about the excitement that next year would bring. And it all seemed to flow by quickly, right until September and you start counting down... “only 3 months until Christmas.” November comes, man Christmas is practically, here... But December hits and it seems like everything slowed to a crawl.

It seemed like when December came Christmas took forever to come! But nothing was like the anticipation of Christmas Eve, you were so filled with anticipation that you couldn’t even sleep!

You remember that?

And it’s funny—as a kid you don’t realize it, but the *anticipation* is part of the joy. The waiting prepares you for the wonder of the day.

And I wonder if that’s not a glimpse into the way God often works with His people. It feels like He makes us wait.

Sometimes, if we’re honest, the waiting is long and the darkness gets deep, and we start to wonder:

Has God forgotten about me?

Has God forgotten His promises?

Has God forgotten His world?

As we open up our bible this morning and look at the Christmas song of Zechariah, Zechariah is singing a song to the God who remembers.

He's singing his song because Israel has been waiting a long time for this promise to be fulfilled. We find that even Zechariah has been waiting and Elizabeth his wife has been waiting.

Nine months of silence for Zechariah... Four hundred years of silence for Israel... Two thousand years since God first promised Abraham... A people living in the long, dark night of waiting.

And then suddenly — like the first streak of dawn — God breaks the silence.

He remembers His people.

He remembers His promises.

He remembers His world.

And Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit for the first time in nine months, opens his mouth...and he doesn't talk about himself, or his newborn son, but he sings about the God who remembers.

Because that's the heart of his song:

God keeps His promises — even when the waiting is long and the darkness deep.

Look with me at our passage this morning in Luke chapter 1, we'll look at verses 57-79.

To understand what a magnificent moment this is, we need a bit of context—some background information that helps us feel the weight of what's happening here.

When we open up in verse 57, we meet a new mom who has just given birth to a son, and her husband who apparently cannot speak—Zechariah. But we're really stepping into a story that has been shaped by waiting.

Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth have been waiting on the Lord to bless them with a child their *entire* marriage. They've prayed and prayed. They've longed and hoped. And now, finally, the child they have begged God for is here.

And Zechariah—he hasn't spoken a single word for nine months. He's literally been silent since the moment the angel appeared to him in the temple. If we back up to the beginning of chapter 1, you remember the scene: Zechariah is serving in the temple, doing what priests do, when suddenly the angel Gabriel appears and announces that he and Elizabeth are going to have a son—**the very one who will prepare the way for the coming Messiah**, the Saviour of Israel.

Now imagine that. Put yourself in Zechariah's sandals. You've prayed your whole married life for a child. You've begged God. And then an angel—an *angel*—shows up and tells you God is answering your prayer. You'd think your first response would be, "Amen! Hallelujah! Praise God for His grace!"

But that's not how Zechariah responds.

Verse 18 tells us he responds in doubt:

"How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

Not praise. Not worship. Not "I believe!"

But questions. Hesitation. "How can I really know this is true?"

And Gabriel's response makes total sense:

"I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God... and you don't believe the words I was sent to bring?"

And because of his unbelief, Gabriel strikes him silent—unable to speak until everything God had promised came to pass.

So now we get it. Now we feel the weight of this moment. The baby Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed for has finally arrived. And after nine months of silence,

nine months of waiting, nine months of listening and watching but not speaking—**Zechariah finally opens his mouth.**

But it's not just this husband and wife who have been waiting.

All of Israel has been waiting.

The last words of the Old Testament—the final note of Malachi—were words of promise: a coming prophet who would prepare the hearts of the people for the Lord. Someone like Elijah who would turn hearts back to God. And then... for four hundred years... nothing. No prophet. No voice. No word from God.

Just silence.

But this child—this baby—Zechariah is telling us *is that promised prophet.* This is John the Baptist. Not the Messiah, but the one who will prepare the way.

Look at verses 76–77:

**“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.”**

This is the one Malachi pointed to.

This is the voice that ends four centuries of silence.

So here we are:

- A couple waiting for a child.
- A priest waiting to speak.
- A nation waiting for a prophet.
- A world waiting for a Saviour.

And in one moment—the silence breaks.

The waiting ends.

And when Zechariah finally opens his mouth, he doesn't talk about himself. He doesn't talk about his long nine-month trial. He doesn't even talk first about his newborn son.

The first words out of his mouth are a song of praise—
a song to *the faithful God who remembers*.

Look at verse 68:

**“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people.”**

In other words:

God remembers His people.

And that leads us straight into the first movement of this passage:

1. God Remembers His People

Zechariah and Elizabeth have been waiting on a child their entire marriage, but here's what Zechariah realizes in this moment: **what God is doing is far bigger than just remembering him and his wife.**

Israel has been waiting **400 years** in silence.

No prophetic word.

No fresh revelation.

Just silence.

And now Zechariah sees that his son is the one who ends that silence — the prophet God will use to prepare the way of the Lord. *He* is the voice Isaiah spoke about:

“A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

Israel has been waiting far longer than Zechariah and Elizabeth. They've been waiting centuries for a Saviour, and now — in this moment — God is beginning to unfold that long-awaited promise of deliverance.

So, Zechariah says, “*God hasn’t forgotten His people. He hasn’t forgotten me.*”

And notice what he sings.

This isn’t just about the baby in his arms — this is about **salvation**:

“*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...*”

“**Horn**” was a symbol of strength and power — like the horn of an ox.

In the Old Testament, to “lift the horn” meant to display strength.

Picture a bull scuffing the ground and tossing its horns — flexing its power before charging.

Zechariah is saying: **God is flexing His strength.**

Not with a sword.

Not with an army.

But with a child born in weakness, who would one day go to a cross.

Do you see it? He’s already pointing thirty years ahead — to the gospel, to the cross, to redemption.

God has **visited**, God has **redeemed**, God has **raised up** a Saviour.

And “**redeem**” means to ransom, to buy freedom.

Jesus will grow up and shed His blood to purchase our freedom from sin, shame, and guilt.

God had not forgotten Zechariah — and He has not forgotten His people.

But it **feels** like that sometimes, doesn’t it?

There are seasons where it seems like nothing is happening — no movement, no answer, no direction.

And the hardest thing in that moment is to wait on God’s timing and trust that He has a purpose in it.

What I've found — and what Zechariah learned — is that God often does His deepest work **while we wait**.

Sometimes we think we're ready... but we're not ready yet.

Think about Zechariah's initial reaction when Gabriel appeared to him. It wasn't praise. It was **doubt**:

"How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

He wasn't ready yet.

He needed those nine months of silence — nine months of waiting — before he was ready to see what God was doing.

That was my story too.

Most of you know — I didn't take the traditional route into ministry. I didn't go straight from high school into Bible college and then into a church.

I took the long way around.

I was called into ministry while working a secular job — retail management.

For the first five years I was in ministry, I was working full-time in retail and pastoring part-time.

And during those years I prayed constantly for God to open a door for full-time ministry.

I hated secular work.

My heart was always in the church.

I felt like I was wasting time, not doing what God called me to do.

But God made me wait *five years*.

And now, looking back, I can see why.

Those years in management — leading teams, dealing with people, navigating conflict, making decisions — all of that was shaping me for what I'm doing today. I just couldn't see it then.

It wasn't that God had forgotten about me.

He was **preparing me** for what He had called me to.

And I'll tell you this — it's made me far more grateful for the privilege of pastoral ministry.

Anytime I get discouraged, I remember when I was praying for the very thing I get to do today.

There is always a reason God makes us wait — but it's never because He forgets.

He remembers His people.

"But Zechariah doesn't stop there. He doesn't just say God remembered *him* or God remembered *Israel*. He goes deeper.

He looks back through centuries of Scripture and realizes something:

God wasn't just remembering His people — God was remembering His promises.

That's point number two...

2. God Remembers His Promises

We keep reading Zechariah's song

Luke 1:69–74 ESV

*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...*

Do you see what Zechariah is saying right there in the text?
That everything happening in this moment — his son's birth, Mary's pregnancy, the coming Messiah — **is God remembering His holy covenant.**

He remembers His promises.

Now when we say “God remembers,” we don’t mean what I mean when I say I remembered something.

A few weeks ago I was making dinner, put a pot of rice on the stove, sat down to watch the news...and completely forgot about it.

All of a sudden it hit me, “*The rice!*” — and I sprinted to the kitchen just in time before it glued itself to the bottom of the pot.

Is that what we mean when we say, “God remembers”?

That He somehow got distracted for a couple thousand years and suddenly went, “*Oh right...I need to send a Redeemer*”?

Of course not.

When Scripture says God remembers, it’s **about His faithfulness**, not His memory.

It means God is acting on what He promised.

He doesn’t forget — He fulfills.

And that’s exactly what Zechariah is singing.

He’s showing us that the Redeemer coming into the world — Jesus — is not God’s Plan B.

It’s not a last-minute rescue mission.

It’s the fulfillment of everything God has been promising from the very beginning.

Zechariah actually walks us back through the whole Old Testament to show us that God keeps His word.

He starts with David — about 1,000 years before Jesus.

Verse 69 says God “has raised up a horn of salvation... in the house of His servant David.”

That goes all the way back to [2 Samuel 7](#), where God promised David:

“I will raise up your offspring after you...
and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever.”

Many kings came and went after David, but none of them reigned forever.
So what king is God talking about?

Zechariah is saying, “*You’re looking at Him. This child being born — this is the King God promised.*”

Then Zechariah points to the prophets — about 700 years before Jesus.

That’s verse 70 — “as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets of old.”

And your mind immediately goes to [Isaiah 9](#):

“For to us a child is born...
and the government shall be on His shoulder...
Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end...
on the throne of David...”

For seven centuries the prophets kept saying,
“A child is coming. A King is coming. A Redeemer is coming.”
And Zechariah says,
“This child...this one in Mary’s womb...this is the One.”

****But Zechariah doesn’t stop there.**

He goes back even further — 2,000 years — to Abraham.**

Verse 73: “the oath that He swore to our father Abraham.”

Genesis 22:

“I will surely bless you...
and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

For two thousand years Israel held onto that promise.

Two thousand years of waiting.

Two thousand years of believing God’s word even when they couldn’t see its fulfillment.

And now Zechariah is saying,

“You’re watching it happen. The child who is coming is the fulfillment of every promise God has ever made.”

God remembers His promises.

And He always keeps them.

But what we see is again the need to wait on God’s timing, there was work to be done.

That’s what Zechariah is singing about.

He sings of the oath that God swore to our Father Abraham, to grant us.

Verse 73, **“the oath that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness.”**

Sometimes the work that God needs to do is not around us, but in us. Do you notice those things that Zechariah is mentioning? Fear...

How often does fear hold us back from serving the Lord or stepping out in faith? Some would say that doubt is the opposite of faith, but it’s fear. Like maybe the work that God is doing in you through this season is teaching you to live in faith, not in fear.

Teaching you trust Him and not hold back.

Zechariah sings about the day that Israel would serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness.

In other words, sanctification. Sanctification is the process of God growing you and I in holiness and righteousness and the bible teaches us that God uses all things, all things in our lives to bring about holiness and righteousness, but especially God uses seasons of waiting, and testing, and trials.

Trials have a way of purging us from all the things we rely on, other than God, and brings us to a point where it's only Him. And in those seasons, we learn to grow in holiness and righteousness.

Ultimately Israel wanted their redeemer right away, but God waited 2000 years to fulfill His promise.

He may be delayed, but He keeps His promises.

Maybe you've been seeking the Lord for healing — physical or emotional. Healing in your marriage. Healing in your family. And it feels like nothing is changing. If God is making you wait, there is a reason... even if you can't see it yet.

Maybe you've been praying for the salvation of a loved one, or for someone to be restored to the Lord, and you're wondering, "*Should I just stop praying?*"

No — wait on the Lord.

Maybe you're praying for God to open a door, to give you direction, to show you the next step — and heaven feels silent. The message for you this morning is the same: **wait on the Lord.**

He may seem delayed, but He keeps His promises.

He may not come when you call, but He is always on time.

He remembers His people.

He remembers His promises.

3. God Remembers His World**

And here's the final thing Zechariah is singing about: **God remembers His world.**

God doesn't just remember Zechariah.

He doesn't just remember Israel.

He remembers His world.

That's what this is all about, isn't it?

"For God so loved the... world that He gave His only begotten Son."

This baby — this child of Zechariah and Elizabeth — John will grow up and point everyone to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Do you see it?

Jesus is the light coming into the world — the One, verse 79 says,

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

This world sits in darkness.

And we can feel it. We can see it.

We see the hate.

We see the injustice.

We see the greed, the war, the sickness, the poverty.

We feel the weight of a world that's looking for hope, looking for answers, looking for light.

And **Jesus Christ is that light** — the One who steps into the darkness to bring salvation to those who sit in the shadow of death.

But it's not just darkness — it's death.

The reason the world is dark and broken is *sin*.

And the impact of sin is death — not just physical death, but eternal separation from God.

And this is why Jesus has come.
Because God has not forgotten His world.
He has not left this world without hope.

Jesus comes into the world **not to condemn the world**,
but that the world might be saved through Him.
Whoever believes in Him is not condemned but has eternal life.

This is the reason for Christmas.

This is what we celebrate:

God has not forgotten His world.

He gave us His Son so that we might be saved out of darkness into light, lifted out of death and brought into eternal life.

This is the hope of Christmas.

This is the message of the gospel.

That God sent His Son into the world — into *our* darkness —
to seek and to save what was lost,
to step into our sin and judgment,
to pay the penalty we could never pay.

And we sing this every year in our Christmas carols.

You hear it in *O Holy Night*:

*“Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Til He appeared, and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.”*

That is Zechariah's song.
That is our song.
A song to the God who remembers His world —
who breaks the silence,

keeps His promises,
and shines His saving light into our darkness.

John's Role — and Ours

But what about Zechariah's son?
If Jesus brings the salvation and the light — what is John's role?

Look again at verses 76–78:

**"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."**

Zechariah looks at his baby boy and says,
"You will go before the Lord. You will prepare His way.
You will tell people about His salvation.
You will announce forgiveness, mercy, and sunrise."

Do you see?
God has not forgotten His world.
Not only does He send His Son to save the world —
He sends a **messenger** to tell the world.

That's who this baby is.
That's what Zechariah is so excited about.
He knows his son will usher in a new season of God's salvation —
a season of announcing the good news of God's Son and all that He brings.

But listen — God still has not forgotten this world.

Jesus Christ has come,
He has died,

He has risen,
He has ascended —
and He is coming again.

And if John the Baptist prepared the world for Jesus' first coming,
we carry on that ministry as we prepare the world for His second coming.

God has not left this world without hope.
He has sent me.
He has sent you.

And just like John, our role is to open our mouths and tell people:
to give the knowledge of salvation,
to speak of forgiveness,
to speak of mercy,
to speak of the sunrise of God's grace.

To tell a dark world that there is light.
To tell a dying world that there is life.

Think about it — over the next few weeks you will see family, friends, neighbours...
People you love.
People who are “sitting in darkness.”
People who need the light of Christ.
People who are waiting for hope and don’t know where to find it.

Who in your world needs to hear the news John came to proclaim?
Who needs to see the light of Christ in you?
Who needs someone to prepare the way for the Lord in their life?

God remembers His world — and He sends His people into it.
Christmas is the perfect time to shine that light.

So, here’s where all of this lands for you and for me.

Zechariah's song isn't just a Christmas song tucked away in [Luke 1](#). It's the story of a God who remembers.

A God who remembers **His people** — even when the waiting is long.

A God who remembers **His promises** — even when nothing seems to be happening.

A God who remembers **His world** — even when the darkness feels overwhelming.

And maybe this morning... you needed to hear that.

Because maybe you've been waiting.

Waiting for God to move.

Waiting for God to answer.

Waiting for God to make sense of the season you're walking through.

Hear Zechariah's song again:

God keeps His promises — even when the waiting is long and the darkness deep.

If God kept a 1,000-year promise to David...

If God kept a 2,000-year promise to Abraham...

If God broke 400 years of silence with the cry of a newborn child...

Then hear me — **He has not forgotten you.**

And that's the hope of Christmas.

Not gifts. Not sentiment. Not a season.

But this truth: **God has not forgotten us.**

He stepped into our world, into our darkness, into our sin.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost,

to lift us out of death into life,

to shine morning light into places we thought would never see morning again.

And now — just like John the Baptist — **He sends us.**

To prepare the way of the Lord.

To tell people there is hope.

To speak of forgiveness, mercy, and sunrise.

To shine the light of Christ into a weary world.

Because the God who remembers His world...has sent **you** into it.

So may we carry the light of Christ with us this Christmas —

and point a weary world to the One who breaks the silence, keeps His promises, and shines His saving light into our darkness.