

Heaven and Nature Sing
“Zechariah's Song: From Doubt to Declaration”
Luke 1:67-79 NIV

Im so happy to be here, being able to bring this sermon for you this morning. There's a lot going on today so we're gonna go speed mode and i'll be quick, but I still believe that God has a good word for us today

We're in a series called Heaven and Nature sing where we are taking a look at four songs that surround the Christmas story

Last week Pastor Mike kicked it off with Mary's song, later titled the Magnificat

We saw that her faith was displayed and she praised God for the miracle that was to come in Jesus

She recognized her need for a Savior, understood that God is an expert at miracle working, and through her song we are encouraged to turn our worry into worship

And I love that we're focusing on songs for this series because if you couldn't tell, I love music!

When it comes to music, I find that there's usually two groups of people

There's the people that focus more on the lyrics and meaning of a song, and then there's people who care more about how the song sounds, the beat, the melody

So I wanna do a show of hands, where are my lyric and meaning people at?

Okay now where are my beat and melody people?

You see i'm a beat and melody kind of guy

- I love a nice melody

- you gotta have a good drum beat...obviously, and if the bass isnt bumpin you're not doin it right

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- Add a guitar line here and some extra spice there, and you got me

I've always been that way but for some reason there was this one song where the lyrics had me in a chokehold

When i was little, there was this song called "The Christmas Shoes".

Whenever I bring it up nobody knows about it so I feel like i just made it up in my head

But does anybody here know that song?

It's crazy because i never knew who the artists were but when I looked it up while working on this sermon, you'd never guess what their group's name is...

NewSong

You see the song came out January 1st 2000 and the group formed in 1981 but if you ask me, *they* copied our name

But this christmas shoes song literally could not be played around me

If it came up on the radio and i heard more than 10 seconds of it, it was already too late. You might as well let the whole song play because by that point, I was already bawling my eyes out

When i was around elementary age, i was part of this dance group with the other kids in church.

We'd do a dance some Sundays as a special part of service and everyone would go awwwww and that was pretty much it.

One Christmas season, my older cousins who were leading the group at the time had the bright idea of choosing a certain song called "The Christmas Shoes"

I slept over their house one day and i told them over and over again, you have no idea that you will unleash the floodgates if you use this song

Do not use this song, change the song, over and over I told them i WILL cry so if you keep the song i am NOT doing this dance

They brushed it off and later in the day they put it on to brainstorm how the dance would go

As was custom for me, i heard the song, instantly started crying, and i went to their kitchen and sat on the floor so they couldnt see me

At some point the older of the two cousins came and saw me 3 feet deep in tears and she was like oh my goshhhh what happenedddd????

She was probably thinking so many things could've happened but i bet the last thing on her mind was the song that was STILL playing in the background

I said I TOLD YOU NOT TO USE THAT SONG

LISTEN TO WHAT'S PLAYING RIGHT NOW

You might be wondering "What could that song possibly be about? To have Sammy like that??"

Well let me tell you

The whole premise of the song is that a little boy's mom is dying and it's Christmas time. He's at the shoe store and he's telling the cashier, "I wanna buy these christmas shoes for my mom but my dad says there's not much time left so could you hurry". I want my mom to look beautiful, if she meets Jesus tonight. Turns out the kid realizes he doesnt

have enough money so the guy behind him pays for it and the kid runs home and he's able to bring the shoes for his mom

Can i be honest with you guys?

As i was working on this sermon I was sitting on the floor in my school in a big open area where students kind of just chill

I had to look up the lyrics to refresh my memory of the song, and would you believe that I almost cried like 3 times??

I thought I was over it but I guess not

But that's what music does, it makes you feel what the songwriter is feeling

Music allows somebody to express their emotion in a way that straight words cant

Im sure a lot of you know, there's something different about coming on a Sunday and singing a song out to God, or having that one worship song play in the car as you scream the lyrics out

This is why this series is so cool, because we get to take a dive into different songs surrounding the Christmas story we all know and love

This week we have Zechariah's song which is found in Luke chapter 1 verses 67-79

Just to give you a bit of context, Zechariah was a priest and his wife Elizabeth also had a priestly family lineage. The Bible describes them as "righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly" in verse 6 of our chapter.

See the problem is, they were past the age of childbearing and still had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive

A day came when Zechariah's priestly division was on duty and he was chosen by lot to go into the temple and burn the incense

In this room where the altar of incense was, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and told Him your prayers have been heard. You and Elizabeth will have a baby and you are to name him John.

He explained that John will be a joy to them and many will rejoice with them. He gave them some instruction on certain things John has to follow and describes how God, through John, will bring many people back to Him as John prepares the way for the Lord

If you're taking notes the first point is

1. Check your doubt

Zechariah after receiving this message responds with doubt

Luke 1 Verse 18, He tells Gabriel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." NIV

I love the respect, all my guys take notes: "im old, but my wife is *well along in years*"

But look at where he went wrong, he said "How can i be sure of this? I am an old man..."

Why is it that we remind God of how this cant work based on I? God I know you said this, but I. God you are the almighty God who has dominion and authority over heaven and earth, but I.

Zechariah received a message from God and instead of putting his faith in God's word that never fails, he put his faith in I.

The angel tells him "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news"

In other words, Bro I am **Gabriel**. You're a priest, you know God's word, you know I appeared to Daniel. On top of that, I stand in the presence of God while you stand in a

shadow of it. Look at where we are. We are in the Holy Place in the temple, before you is the veil that separates this area from the Most Holy Place (also called the Holy of Holies). You have been selected to burn incense in a shadow of where I come from

What more of a sign could you need?

And so Gabriel tells Zechariah “now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”

Check your doubt

Zechariah received a message from God through the angel Gabriel in one of the most intimate places you could be with God at the time, and yet his focus was on what He and Elizabeth were capable of rather than what God could do

It’s easy for us to get wrapped up in our circumstances, especially when it’s been a while.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and couldn’t have kids but there was a time when they were young and should have been able to but were unsuccessful.

This was a multi-year prayer that seemed to have had no answer, but God was saying “not yet”

To give you a big scale context, this message from God is one of the first times, if not the first time, that God had given a message to His people in around 400 years.

There was a period of about 400 years between the last book of the Old Testament Malachi and Jesus’ grand entrance into the world

We don’t have time to get into it but Jesus himself confirms that Malachi prophesied about John the Baptist

So 400 years with no great revelations from God and finally, the time has come where Zechariah's own son would be the fulfillment of a 400 year old prophecy.....and Zechariah blew it

He doubted even after having every reason to have faith

Kinda sounds like us sometimes huh?

It definitely sounds like me at a couple points in my life

Thank God he doesn't render us mute every time we lack faith but know that your doubt will cost you

Pastor Mike touched on this last week, how many times have you doubted and worried about something only for that thing to never happen?

But even if God doesn't cause you to be mute, you will do it to yourself

Instead of praising through the storm because we're holding onto His promises, our mouth is closed shut

Instead of opening our mouth and crying out to God for help, we've become silent and static in our faith

I can tell you that there will never be a time when a lack of faith will benefit you

I'd rather have faith that makes me look crazy and believe God for a miracle than have no faith and be spiritually mute

Check your doubt

The next point for your notes is

2. Correct your doubt

After the angel leaves and Zechariah goes back outside, everyone was wondering why he was in there for so long, so he kept making signs to the people and they realized he had seen a vision inside

He went home and just as God said, (and health class taught us), Elizabeth becomes pregnant

Zechariah goes home that day and he says “is that the incense I was burning, or do I smell a good time coming?”

Fast forward, Elizabeth gives birth and just as God said, the baby was a boy

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the baby and they were gonna name him after his dad Zechariah, but Elizabeth spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

They said who? John? You must be loopy from the epidural, you don't have anyone in your family named John.

We are in the first century girl we don't just name people random names

So here comes one of my new favorite parts of the Bible,

They make signs to Zechariah like bro, you're the only one with sense here right now, what are you guys naming your son?

Look at this, verse 63:

He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord's hand was with him. Luke 1:63-66 NIV

Zechariah corrects his doubt and says “His name is John”

Look at the shift here

I checked multiple translations of the Bible and they all said the same thing, “His name IS John”

Zechariah remembered God’s message through Gabriel and submitted to Him

He said His name IS John.

In other words, don't ask me, it’s already been decided

Come on, if we would just do the same with our worries and doubts, if we would just reorient our focus and instead of saying “God I cant” we say “it’s already been decided, my life is in God’s hands”, things would be so different

If we would just submit to God and His plans for us we would avoid so much heartache, and so much headache

If Zechariah had just said from the beginning, “may God’s word be fulfilled, as YOU say my Lord”, he wouldnt have gone through 9 months of silence

Your doubt has a cost but God’s word will never fail, so as quickly as you check yourself and realize your doubt, correct it

Because of this, Zechariah began to praise God

And from his heart and the Spirit of God, flowed the song of this week which will give us our last point,

3. Make Your Declaration

Just like Mary’s song, this one also was given a title later on

It's called the Benedictus, and this title comes from the first word of the song when translated to Latin. This first word is...you guessed it! Benedictus

See I don't know latin, i don't think many of us here would know latin, so how bout we read it in english together.

Starting in verse 67, "...Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—
to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Zechariah's road of faith has led us from doubt to declaration

His first word to Gabriel was “how?” Now his first word after everything is “Praise”

Why does Zechariah praise?

Because: he recognizes that this is the time his people had been eagerly expecting for so long.

He said “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us”

He praises because of God’s faithfulness: verse 70, 72, and 73 are all praises because God remained faithful to His promises

He praises because of what God WILL do: He says in verse 74 and 75, “to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days”

I think these are things we can all give God praise for today

We can praise God for giving to us things He has promised to give us. We should always praise God for what He has done

We can praise because of His faithfulness

I have seen it time and time again, the faithfulness of our God is unmatched and there is nobody that could even stand close to competition

I know with 100% certainty that God has been faithful to every single person here even if you may not know it yet

We can praise God for the things he WILL do. Maybe God had given you a word that you would be healed but right now you’re still in pain, right now you’re still in treatment

But we serve a faithful God who’s word never fails

Come on let's make it normal in our lives to praise God for what He WILL do

I don't need to see the results, all I need is a word from my God

HIS word is the final say, not my report, not what my boss says, nothing but the Word of my God who never fails, who has never left me, never abandoned me

The God that has loved you since you were in your mother's womb, before you had a name he called you chosen, before you had a name he called you beautiful, before you had a name he called you worth dying for.

Like i said, this would be quick, so as the worship team comes up:

We see that Zechariah ends his song with a final declaration for his son John who we know as John the Baptist

Verses 76-79:

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Luke 1:76-79 NIV

We see Zechariah again correct his doubt by making this declaration

Zechariah started this journey with doubts that he would even have a son, and his song ends with words echoing Gabriel's message

The word of the Lord will never fail, and Zechariah declares that to John, calling Him a prophet of the Most High, saying that he would prepare the way of the Lord, just like Gabriel told Him

See Zechariah talks about “salvation from our enemies” twice and this is because the Jews expected, and are still waiting for, a warrior messiah. A political messiah. One who would free them from their national enemies. Because of this they missed Jesus even though He was right in front of them

That’s where the whole beef the pharisees had with Him came from

Jesus made claims that He was God and the messiah but because He didnt fit their expectation, they rejected Him

Don’t let that be you

If God fit every one of your expectations He’d be a pretty limited God wouldnt He?

If you could understand every move God made He wouldn’t be much wiser than you, would He?

As we know, and im sure Zechariah soon found out, Jesus came not to establish a kingdom on earth which has an expiration date, but to establish the kingdom of heaven which will reign forever

One day Jesus will return and will physically rule but until then, the kingdom of heaven remains in the hearts of all who follow Jesus so that one day we will enter it

If you could stand with me, I want us to focus our attention on a section of Zechariah’s song as we close

In verses 69, and 76-79, Zechariah says:

“He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David...And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to

prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.””

Luke 1:69, 76-79 NIV

Zechariah pretty much wrote this part for me so thanks bro

But if you don't know Jesus as your Savior today, i want you to know that He can be the horn of your salvation. What does that mean? Think of a bull, what part of a bull would you associate with power?

The horns right?

Jesus can be your power if you would just turn to Him

He could be your power to overcome a sin that's held you captive, He could be your power to overcome depression, Jesus can be the horn of your salvation

As Zechariah said, Jesus, because of the mercy of God, has given you an offer for salvation through the forgiveness of your sins...and the sun will shine on the darkness you've faced