

the story of salvation Surprised by Peace

Խաղաղութեան Անակնկալը

Advent 2

Luke 1:57-79

Last week we left by examining life of Zachariah and the promise God made to him. God loves to surprise us. The couple Zach and Liz were surprised about the promise of having a child in their old age. Zac was muted, as he was asking for a sign.

God is surprising humanity, starting with the Jewish nation with the birth of John the Baptist. John has an important message of repentance for his nation; John also will lead them to the main course, the coming of the Messiah.

Let us read the birth of John:

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸ And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹ And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, ⁶⁰ but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” ⁶¹ And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” ⁶² And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. ⁶⁴ And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. (Luke 1:57-64 ESV)

-Calling a Jewish child the family name was the tradition. “But Elizabeth gives her son the name “John” (God is gracious). **Surprise!**

The crowd was surprised about the name... Zechariah writes the name the angel gave him for the child (v. 13). Zechariah knows he must follow those instructions, so he announces the child’s name as “John.” **1**

-Then immediately Zachariah’s tongue was freed. Another **surprise!**

What a nice day to have a voice. The Spirit of the Lord opened Zac’s voice. And we read that the first thing that he did was to bless God. That means first thing he did was to worship God.

I think long silence allowed him to reflect what God called him for.

The question of verse 66, “What then is this child going to be?”

In the preceding verses we saw Mary magnifying the Lord in a hymn of praise called the *Magnificat*. Now Zechariah’s mouth is open. And He is praising God for what He has been doing. This hymn that we will read “is known as the *Benedictus*.” ...This hymn of praise anticipates and overviews the careers of the two children whom divine destiny has brought together.

**Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
71 that we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us;
72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
78 because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:76-79 ESV)**

Though John is the child born, Zechariah’s hymn focuses on the person to whom John will point—the One promised long ago. who would be sent to rescue and bless those who turn to him. Like Mary’s hymn, **this thanksgiving psalm is filled with Old Testament imagery and declares how the strong one from the house of David will be a light of rescue and guidance for his people.” 2**

I will concentrate on from v77:

77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people (the story of salvation, both through John the Baptist, and ultimately through Jesus, the Son of God)

in the forgiveness of their sins, (repentance which leads to forgiveness of sin) (It was the message of the John the Baptist, and it was the message of Jesus)
⁷⁸ **because of the tender mercy of our God**, (God is merciful, *hesed* his loyal love,, his covenant and promise)

We don't deserve this. We cannot earn it. We cannot do anything about it. It is because of his mercy, His loyal love, his promise to continue to have covenant with us.

whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, this will lead us to the light, real light that brings life in the dark world, we can walk from shadow of death, because there is life, light. God is visiting us....God is visiting us....God is visiting us....

to guide our feet into the way of peace." (God is bring peace to this crazy world) So the Son, who serves as a bright morning light, comes from heaven and shines on those in darkness and death, guiding them into the path of peace. ³

-**John was man of God**, prophet who had message of repentance; but he guided us towards real light, towards ultimate repentance which only comes from Jesus.

John knew he is not an end. He said: He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:30.

What do we mean when we talk about peace?

Ask any child in the Middle East about peace. Ask any refugee about peace. Ask the children of Artsakh who had to leave their homes.

Everyone talks about peace, and they mean it well, mostly external peace, the absence of war and enmity. The strange part is that the world does not see that the root of the problem is human sin. This means in order to have genuine peace one has to start with God and himself/herself. Only God can give that peace.

1. Peace with God

Our alienation from God broke the relationship between the creature and the Creator. **God, our Maker, delights in restoring our intimate relationship with Him.** He wants peace and He initiates that by sending His Son.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 ESV)

This child-king, Prince of PEACE will bring the peace of God to humanity.

Angels were singing to the shepherds when Jesus was born:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace. (Luke 2:14)

God's desire is to give peace to humanity and teach us that it comes only when we glorify Him. God is most glorious person, reality, existence in your life. Five times in NT God is called "**the God of peace.**"⁴

Jesus himself said,

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

(John 14:27 ESV)

Paul said:

"having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility." (Ephesians 2:12-14 ESV)

John Piper adds on this topic: "What this means is that the peace of God, or the peace of Christ, can never be separated from God himself and Christ himself. If we want peace to rule in our lives, God must rule in our lives. God's purpose is not to give you peace separate from himself. His purpose is to give you peace by being the most glorious Person in your life."⁵

Paul explains in his letter to the Romans:

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1- ESV)

We are justified by faith; that means we have peace with God through Jesus. This is foundation. Please build all your relationships on this foundation.

2. Peace with yourself

It is a very disturbing thing when you lose peace with yourself. You cannot escape from yourself. You've got to live with yourself.

-Have you accepted yourself? Do you know that you are the beloved child of God, made in His image? He loves you despite all you have done.

-Sometimes guilt and shame steal away our peace.

-Are you living in anxiety? Do you keep fighting with yourself?

Some people keep hearing this and do nothing about it.

Albert Einstein said, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results”.

Paul was not living in a very peaceful life on the outside (prison, torture, persecution....)

do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 ESV)

Anxiety is something I fight with it as well. When I am attacked with it, I go to God in prayer and thanksgiving. I evaluate my life and bring forth my anxieties to Him. I ask His peace to rule over me. I breathe Jesus in and breathe out all the anxiety. I ask the Holy Spirit to fill me up with His presence.

3. Peace with Others

We lose our peace when we are in conflict with others. I recently heard a person say, “I love Christmas, but when this or that person is invited for the Christmas party, I lose my peace.”

In Romans 12:18 Paul says, **“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”**

In this season some people get depressed or they don’t want to be around certain people in gatherings. Some of us have problems with others and we lose the peace with them. Funny, we want to have peace of God, but we don’t want to have peace with others.

We are going over the letter of Ephesians. Paul wrote about healing those broken relationships:

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
(Ephesians 4:31-32 ESV)

How liberating when we make peace with others. How liberating to remember how Christ forgave you and liberated you from the heavy “sins”.

Why don’t you allow God to surprise you?

You see my sermon series are about God's way to work in our lives. He surprises us: surprised by hope, by peace, next week by joy,. You have your part here. Humbly be receptive to all these surprises.

Application:

-Some practical ways to enjoy God's peace in your life:

Volunteer at a food pantry

Listen to someone with a different point of view

Go caroling to people who may be alone this Christmas

Forgive one person in your life

Surprise someone with a kind anonymous note, gift...

Listen to Handel's Messiah and meditate on the words

Go through toys and donate some to others who don't have

Apologize for something you shouldn't have done

Share a treat with a neighbor

Help a stranger in need

Read, pray and mediate on John 14:27

[Compliment someone else behind their back??](#)

Invite someone and share a meal

Make a donation to a worthy cause

Surprise the treasurer of the PACC

Write a thank you note to someone who has made your life better

In the darkness of the virgin's womb, the child grows. In the darkness of the world's pain, the blessed light begins to kindle. In the darkness of our own doubting, the great hope begins to rise again like a lump in the throat: the hope that God will come to us truly, that the child will be born again in our midst, the Prince of Peace in a world at war, the hope that God will ransom us and our world from the darkness that seeks to destroy us. --Frederick Buechner

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Romans 15:13 ESV)

1. Darrell L. Bock, *NIV Application Commentary on Luke*, p 75

2. Darrell L. Bock, *NIV Application Commentary on Luke*, p 76

3. Darrell L. Bock, *NIV Application Commentary on Luke*, p 78
4. Romans 15:13; 16:20; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20
5. John Piper, *God's Glory and our Peace*

Do you know that in the last 3500 years, there have been just 230 years of peace throughout the civilized world? It is the past 100 years that will undoubtedly be remembered as the military century. Of all war fatalities over the past half millennium, fully three-quarters occurred during the twentieth century—including roughly 26 million in World War I and 53 million in World War II.

<https://www.quora.com/When-was-the-last-time-there-was-no-war-anywhere-on-Earth>

Summary of the John the Baptist

1. John Lived a Godly Life.
2. John Challenged the People's Sins.
3. John Pointed the Way to Christ.