

A fulfilled promise deepens your trust in an individual.

For instance: If I walked out into the crowd this morning and said, "If you come and see me after the service is done I promise that I will give you a dollar." Your trust in me will either be strengthened, or it will become fragmented depending on whether or not I come through with my promise to you. A fulfilled promise deepens your trust in an individual. They come through with whatever they've committed themselves to, and if you're able to see them follow through repeatedly, you can develop a greater dependency on that particular individual.

Well, this morning we are going to be looking at the next Christmas Song in our series and it's going to come from a man by the name of Zechariah. We're going to be looking at Luke 1 and we're going to this man filled with the Holy Spirit and praise God as he witnesses with his own eyes, God fulfilling a promise. *Zechariah eventually comes to a great understanding* that when God commits to something, that when God goes into a covenant with an individual or a group of people, that promise is as good as fulfilled. There is no doubt that God will follow through with every promise that He makes.

I said Zechariah eventually comes to an understanding of God's faithfulness to His promised word. But, when we're first introduced to this man, he is a man that carries some doubts. Towards the opening of the book of Luke we're told that Zachariah is an older man, doesn't have any kids, and that he's a priest serving in the temple when an angel of the Lord (the angel by the name of Gabriel) appeared to him to announce that he and his wife, Elizabeth are going to have a son.

This son of theirs is going to be pretty special. He will be used by God to turn a lot of the hearts of Israel back to the Lord their God. This son of theirs is going to be the forerunner of the Messiah, the one who prepares the way for the coming Christ! Their son would be John the Baptist, one of the great pillars of the Christian faith. This is pretty spectacular news! This is a promise that God is making to an older man that will have a profound impact on his own individual family but also have an impact on the history of the human race.

This is where Zechariah should rejoice! But he doesn't. He actually responds with uncertainty and doubt. Luke 1:18 tells us that after Gabriel gave the news to this older man, Zechariah responds by saying, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." There's no clinging to the promises of God in that moment. There's doubt.

What happens to Zechariah, to prove that God's promises are indeed real, Zechariah's ability to speak is taken away from him. Elizabeth, his wife becomes pregnant, and for that entire time Zechariah remains absolutely silent. He is given a lot time to think about what the angel had said. But to also think about God's faithfulness throughout all of history.

And once this child is delivered, Zechariah is at last given the ability to speak again and out his mouth he pours out praise for His great God! Throughout this song there are echoes of God's promises that are being fulfilled and Zechariah can't help but rejoice over them!

Read Luke 1:67-79

The big idea that I want you to see this morning from this passage and what I hope you will do as you walk out of here today, I hope to see you, **"Rejoicing Over the Fulfilled Promises of God."** What I want you take notice in this passage is that Zechariah is not just thankful for the fulfilled promise that resulted in the birth of his son John (John the Baptist). But Zechariah comes the realization that God is fulfilling multiple promises that have been made ages ago.

Now remember, Zechariah is a man who is a priest before God, and knows his Old Testament history that details the covenants (the promises) that God has made with His people centuries ago. So as he takes notice of how faithful his God is, it's no wonder that we find him here rejoicing.

If you're taking notes this morning, I have broken this passage down into three different sections and within those sections you'll notice Zechariah making a reference to a covenant (promise) that God has made with His people, and each fulfilled promise gives us a reason to rejoice.

First, Rejoice Over God's Everlasting Victory.

Read Luke 1:67-70

There's a person that Zechariah references within the opening lines of this praise. He makes mention of David. I don't think his name is randomly put in there. David can be argued as one of the greatest kings Israel had ever the privilege of being led by. But that's not the reason David's name is significant. It's significant because God had made a promise to David. Throughout church history we have called this the Davidic covenant.

You can read the entire covenant in 2 Samuel 7, but let me just read a portion of it.

The Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

God had promised to David that there would an everlasting kingdom established through his offspring. That through the line of David there would come an individual

who would not, and who could not be defeated. This is obviously not a reference to Zechariah's son, John. But this is talking about Jesus!

But Zechariah knows that John is the one who will go before Jesus. Jesus is the long awaited Messiah, the long awaited King. And I find it really interesting as I think about the timeline of when this praise/rejoicing takes place. Jesus isn't even born yet; he probably won't even be born for another six months as He is still within womb of Mary. But Zechariah talks about all the accomplishments of God in the past tense.

Notice what he says. He says that God "has visited," that God has "redeemed his people," and that He "raised up a horn of salvation for us." You think about each one of those things...

God has "visited us." You can say sure that God has visited them already. Zechariah and Elizabeth have been blessed with a child upon the visitation from a messenger from God. And God is there among them already as Mary is pregnant with Jesus Christ, the long awaited King.

But the next one in line, Zechariah says that God has "redeemed his people." **Redemption is a word that refers to paying a price to release someone from bondage.** So we have to answer the questions, who is in bondage and who pays the price to release the bondage. ¹So who's in bondage, who's held captive? Well, we are. All of humanity enters into the world enslaved to sin. We come into this world with the inability to defeat sin. We need rescued and freed from it. ²Who is the one that steps in to pay that price for our freedom? Jesus does! Listen to how Romans 6 describes it,

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you are a Christian, you used to be enslaved and in bondage to sin. You had no ability within yourself to stop from doing things that are shameful. The end of those things is death. The end of sin is destruction. But Jesus stepped in at the right time and paid the price for your redemption by coming to this earth and being nailed to the cross.

And here we find Zechariah talking about redemption, something that is not fully accomplished yet, but he's talking about it in the past tense because he knows that when God says He's going to do something, there is no doubt that He will follow through with His promise.

And then Zechariah points out one more accomplishment of God's. He says there in verse 69, that God "has raised up a horn of salvation for us." As he talks about salvation it does have echoes of redemption. And we just talked about that, so let's look at what it means to "raise up a horn."

Throughout the Old Testament the horn was a symbol of protection and a symbol strength. And the Messiah King, who is coming to visit the people of God, who is coming to purchase the redemption of those lost in sin, is not a weak King. He is One that no one will be able to contend with, He has strength that incomparable. He sets out to bring salvation and no one will be able to stop Him. He is coming to bring an Everlasting Victory... and that is something to rejoice over.

Zechariah is without a doubt rejoicing over that, but then he continues on in praise. Let's continue reading...

Read Luke 1:71-75

Second, Rejoice Over God's Mercy

1. Abrahamic Covenant

This was an unconditional covenant made between God and Abraham. A portion of the covenant can be found in Genesis 12,

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God determined to call out a special people for Himself, and through that special people He would bring blessing to all the nations. So God promised to Abraham land, he promised to him many descendants, but most significantly there was promise of blessing and redemption.

This is a promise made to a man thousands of years before...

2. God never forgets

*I forget though –Children's bulletin mentioned that I would have a treat for anyone that came up to me after the service.

3. God's Mercy – God shows compassion and forgiveness towards us when He has every right to punish and to pour out His wrath.

- God made an unconditional covenant and we see Him following through with it now.

Third, Rejoice Over God's Providing Salvation

Read Luke 1:76-80

1. A dad talking about his son!
 - *There is so much joy in watching your kids grow. Hope
 - *I wrote letters to my daughters...
 - a. John had a large responsibility in front of him –there is joy in responsibility/purpose
 - b. John will prepare the way for Jesus
 - i. A message of Repentance
 - ii. Peace = repentance
 - Slide on Instagram
 - “There is an unbreakable bond between repentance and true rest.”
 - c. New Covenant – between God and the followers of Jesus Christ

Conclusion:

I want to give you a couple of application points to think about as you head of here this afternoon. I think it would be really good to have a discussion about these on the way home in the car or perhaps within your small group or to spend time praying about throughout your week.

Be Amazed at the Promises of God. Think about the Old Testament saints for a minute. Throughout their lifetime they were told of a coming King. Again and again they were given promises from God and He assured them that He would follow through with the promises/covenants that He made with them. And these people (millions of them), for centuries, fed their souls on the promises of God and didn't see most of these promises come to completion. But they walked by faith. They had to. They had to walk far more by faith than we do. They looked forward to redemption as a thing hoped, but not yet seen.

But here we are, on the other side of the cross, we don't look at redemption as something hoped for or as something that has been promised. We look at it as something that has been accomplished. We can look at the Word of God and can know that Jesus Christ said, “It is finished!” I want you to be amazed at the promises of God because so many of the promises that have been made, so many of things that the saints and prophets from millennia's ago hoped for, we have the privilege knowing the full story.

I want you to catch the privileges you have while living under the full light of the gospel. Because I do think there is a danger that many of us can overlook the privilege that we have. The reason for that is because the things that are in front of you all the time (if you're not careful) I believe that you can have a tendency to lose to just how amazing they truly are.

*Think about like this for a minute: how many of you are amazed at technology? I remember when we first got the Internet at my house. It was around 17 years old, and it was fast Internet either, it was a slow dial up system where we couldn't use the phone and be on the computer at the same time. But at that moment in the late 90's, I was amazed by it. It was something new. I could actually get emails from my friends! But as time as moved forward, I'm not really amazed by dial up Internet. I'm ready to move onto something better and faster. And I often forget how privileged I'm with the technology that is available to me today, because I'm around it all the time.

But as I draw it back to the privileges that we have today in the gospel, can I encourage you not to forget privileges what you truly have? Can I challenge you to focus on the promises of God that have been fulfilled and allow those promises to turn your heart towards God with rejoicing?! So be amazed at the promises of God!

Serve God without Fear. One of the things that was proclaimed in this song (74-75), was that God has delivered us "from the hand of our enemies" that "we might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days." So Zechariah declares this at the birth of his son, and this is son John (John the Baptist) grows to live a life of serving His great God. John was an itinerant preacher, traveling from place to place preaching a message of repentance and declaring there was a greater one than him coming soon. And as you observe John's life, there is no doubt that John served and lived without fear. But the part that gets me is where it says that *we have been delivered from the hand of our enemies...* And then knowing that John's life would come to a tragic end by being captured and imprisoned by an evil ruler. Then eventually John was beheaded and had his head brought out on a platter for many people to see.

So how do we join those statements? This is a statement of serving God without fear and a statement of being delivered from the hands of our enemies. Because if Zechariah meant that deliverance from our enemies would lead to a stress free, problem free, persecution free life... Well then, that would prove to be untrue within one generation. John definitely wasn't delivered from difficulty and wasn't delivered from having his life taken from him.

So Zechariah, through inspiration from the Holy Spirit, must be talking about a different enemy than the people who could do harm to us here on the earth. I think that we have to come to the conclusion that the enemy that is referred to here, the enemy that we don't have to fear is a spiritual enemy.

We are in a real battle, but it's not against other people. Ephesians 6 says,

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We are in a real battle, against an enemy that wants to destroy us! But the promise that is given to us within this song is that we have been delivered from this enemy. The world, our sinful flesh, the devil and his demonic realm shall never prevail over the believer in Jesus Christ. And in understanding that, we can serve our God without fear. There are over 300 references in the Bible telling individuals who are following after God to “fear not.”

Through the victory that we have in Jesus there ought to be an indestructible courage within the Christian to do, and to say, and to go wherever God may lead us. What would it look like if we clung to the mercies of God and served Him without fear? Misplaced fear can alter the actions and directions of our entire lives!! That’s far more dangerous and far more saddening.

But thankfully God didn’t leave us on our own. He gave us each other so that when we are afraid there are others around us to strengthen our determination. He gave us the Holy Spirit to guide us and embolden us. And He gave us His word that we can know that Jesus’ victory is our victory, and He sets us free from walking through this life afraid.

So as we close today, I hope that you walk out of here this afternoon rejoicing in the amazing God that we serve. He is a faithful God. We too can be like the Old Testament saints and cling to the promises that He has made throughout the centuries. And He has been dependable every single time to follow through with what He has set out to do. So rejoice as look back, but I also stand here in hope. Knowing that God has promised that He will return. We know that this is not our home, and that we will one day stand in the presence of our King. That’s a promise that I am certain of! Because the One who made that promise is faithful! He is worthy of placing all of our trust into His care. For that which God has promised... He will fulfill!