

LUKE 1:67–75 CHRISTMAS JOY & WISDOM FROM A DUMB MAN!

*Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:
Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people,
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, who have been since the world
began,
That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us,
To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy
covenant,
The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve
Him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.*

Think of someone that you consider “dumb” -- can't add much more than two plus two, or barely knows his own birthday. We are all dumb at various times in various things. There's another meaning to the word “dumb,” isn't there?. Dumb also means “mute, silent, unable to speak.” Someone who is “deaf and dumb” can't hear or talk. By either definition, to learn something from a dumb man is difficult. However, in our text for today, a dumb man teaches us great things!

The dumb man is Zacharias, or Zechariah (an alternate English transliteration). Zacharias was a Jewish priest married to Elizabeth. Elizabeth was barren—unable to have children. They were advancing in years. Luke tells us Zacharias was assigned by lot (on the order of “drawing straws”) to burn incense at the incense altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. While doing so, the angel Gabriel appeared to him! startling him, and telling him that his prayer had been heard. He and his wife would have a son. They were to name him John (John the Baptist, to us). He would prepare the hearts of the Jewish people for the presence of the promised Messiah and Savior. “Repent and be baptized, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” would be his words. However, Zacharias had overpowering doubts that this could be true. Gabriel told him, Because you did not believe my words, you will be “dumb,” silent, unable to speak, until these things came true. Which they did.

Zacharias had to motion to communicate with the worshippers waiting outside. Later, when Zacharias' time of service ended, he returned home.

Elizabeth conceived a child in her old age! Nine months later a little baby boy was born. And eight days after the birth, the baby was circumcised, becoming a son of the covenant, and also was named. It was on that day that Zacharias spoke the joyous words of our text.

We are going to spend some time this morning on the things that happened during the nine months before Zacharias spoke the words of to this text.

“Mute” Zacharias had much time to ponder the Lord’s ways and words brought by the angel Gabriel. We could boil them down to perhaps three things. 1) Zacharias had to come to grips with God being willing and able to do the impossible for Elizabeth and for him by giving them a son. 2) That God specified his name would be “John.” 3) That the boy would be the forerunner of the promised Savior.

1) Perhaps Zacharias had long given up on having a son. Perhaps the “prayer” of which the angel spoke was a prayer(s) uttered years earlier and now forgotten. Or perhaps he still prayed for a son, but it had become more of a habit than a petition of faith. At any rate, Zacharias did not believe! when the angel said God would grant his prayer. Do you ever pray like that, not really expecting the Lord to grant your request?

Another thing, if you had been in Zacharias’s shoes maybe you would have begun to hope that God wouldn’t grant your desire, because you relished the self-pity barrel you were in in, “Woe is me!” and relishing the sympathy of others. Nothing in the text says that Zacharias actually felt that way, but it’s likely something with which the devil would have tempted him, as he does you. It’s easy to forget the Lord’s abundant mercy and pardon for sins, and fixate on what one doesn’t have, and then not want to stop feeling sorry for self. It’s like the child who asks for a piece of cake, but when mom says, “Not until 3:00,“ the child stomps away in a fuss. At 3:00 when the cake is brought out, the child, still pouting, refuse! Zacharias did not cling to any such temptation. He learned to trust the Lord. Do so as well!

2.) During those nine months, Zacharias had time to ponder that his baby boy’s name should be John. “John” means “The Lord is gracious”—very fitting in this case. Zacharias had time to ponder the Lord’s grace, His undeserved love and pardon. Do you suppose the devil also tempted Zacharias to find fault with that name? Perhaps the devil approached him with, “What’s wrong with *Zacharias*??” Even friends and neighbors would later suggest it. If the devil did so tempt him, Zacharias did not doubt the Lord further. He trusted His mercy and love.

Use the quiet time God gives you, maybe when you are sick or injured. Review His Word, and see His mercy and grace to you personally. In that power, stand firmly on what He says. -- One time in a stressful situation a church member used the word “surrender”—good choice of words. The Lord’s will and His ways are perfect and filled with love through Jesus. Always “surrender” to Him, as He leads you and others safely to heaven. This is especially true at Advent and Christmas time, when expectations run high. The devil tempts you to think all things should go your way. But then remember the name “John,” “the Lord is gracious.” Trust your gracious, loving Lord!

3) Zacharias also had had nine months to ponder the glorious truth that the Messiah was at long last at the doorstep! “John” would go before Him, preaching in the power and spirit of great Old Testament prophet Elijah, correcting the people’s hearts, leading them to repentance from sin and to trust in the Promised Savior for forgiveness. His son would make ready a people prepared to meet the Lord with joy! What a privileged role his son would have.

But the even greater truth was that the Savior and Seed promised to Abraham was about to come, actually the “Seed of the woman” promised to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Old Testament people had waited 4000 years. Now at long last the promise would be fulfilled! The devil had led many to disregard the promise and to understand it only in a political sense. But Zacharias “got it straight.” He said, “For you [child] will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins” (Luke 1:76-77). . The Messiah would be a spiritual Savior, bringing forgiveness of sin—so sorely needed! How Zacharias must have cherished the Truth unfolding before Him. How “dumb” he had been to disbelieve the angel’s words. As the birth of his baby son grew closer, Zacharias became more and more staunch in the joy of salvation. As you await to celebrate again the birth of the Savior, you also ponder these great truths that you hear at church and in Scripture reading at home. In Jesus, salvation has come! Trust Him!

Zacharias saw his wife progress with her pregnancy. He learned from Mary, Elizabeth’s unmarried cousin, that she had also been visited by the angel Gabriel saying that she would be the virgin mother of the Savior! When Mary came to visit, Elizabeth’s baby in her womb, leaped for joy as Mary entered, carrying little baby Jesus in her womb. Mary spent three months there and surely rehearsed many times over these unusual events. She surely also displayed her simple faith in the Lord which led her to say to Gabriel, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). What a model for Zacharias and for us.

On the he eighth day the baby was to be circumcised and named. Friends and neighbors suggested “Zacharias.” Elizabeth said, “No, it’s John.” The question was defaulted to Zacharias the father. He requested a tablet, and he wrote saying—either meaning as he wrote he spoke the words, or the words he wrote *said*, “His name is JOHN!” No hesitation. No wavering. What a turn around for Zacharias! Indeed “John”—God is gracious to sinners all. May such conviction and joy be yours at Christmas time! Learn from Zacharias.

Then, filled with the Holy Spirit Zacharias spoke the words of our text, confident and joyous in salvation, which are also words for you:

Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people,

THANK THE LORD! HAS SEEN OUR MISERY AND HAS COME TO PAY THE PRICE TO SET US FREE!

He has raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of His servant David,

JUST AS GOD GAVE HORNS TO BEASTS FOR OFFENSE AND DEFENSE, SO GOD HAS GIVEN TO HIS PEOPLE A HORN OF SALVATION—THE HE PROMISED SAVIOR AND DESCENANT OF KING DAVID.

As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began,

THIS SAME PROMISE GOD GAVE IN TO ADAM AND EVE AT THE FIRST SIN HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN BY GOD’S PROPHETS AND PEOPLE EVER AFTER!

That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us,

WE THE BELIEVERS—NOT JUST ONE SPECIAL NATION OR GROUUP, BUT THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH—ALL BELIEVERS OF ALL TIME—ARE SAFE FROM SATAN AND ALL WHO HATE US!

To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant,

GOD FULFILLS HIS PROMISE OF MERCY, NEVER FORGETTING!

The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:

THE OATH HE SWORE TO ABRAHAM TH THAT HIS “SEED” WOULD BE A BLESSING FORALL!

To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.

IN JESUS THE BELIEVERS ARE FREE FROM THEIR FEAR PUNISHMENT FOR SIN AND FEAR OF ENEMIES. WE SERVE THE LORD IN HEARTS OF FAITH EACH DAY AND THEN FOREVER!

What powerful words of faith and wisdom these are from Zacharias, at one time a “dumb” man. Learn something from him—that we, though dumb, are safe in the Christchild. Serve the Savior each day at Christmas and beyond!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---