Jesus, the Horn of Salvation, and the Rising Sun

Luke 1:67-80

Key Verse: 1:69 “He raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.”

Merry Christmas! For the last three weeks we studied Christmas messages from the prophets of the Old Testaments such as Isaiah and Micah. Today we will hear the Christmas message from Zechariah, who was not a prophet of the OT, but was a priest of the NT and the father of John the Baptist.

First, Jesus, the horn of salvation (67-73) Look at verses 67-68. Zechariah praised the God of Israel because God came to his people and redeemed them. (68) To Zechariah the visit of God was special. Zechariah and his people thought that God had forgotten them because there had been no prophets for the last 430 years in Israel. We celebrate Christmas with our family. People come and visit. So, the West family drove hundreds of miles to spend time with their family. Suppose no one visits you or comes to you during the holidays. You feel lonely and become sad and may think that you are forgotten. The Israelites had thought the same because they didn’t have any sign of God’s presence for the last 430 years. Imagine that they had no Christmas for 430 years! But now, the day of darkness is over and the time of suffering ends because of the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah came to be with them and redeem them. Here the word, ‘redeem’ means to set them free from the chains of curse and misery, just as slaves become free after their price is paid off. How did the Messiah come to this world? He came as a baby in a manger, born of the Virgin Mary. The Messiah was born in the lowest and most humble way so that we may have peace and comfort through his manger.

Look at verse 69. “***He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.***” Zechariah praised God because he raised a horn of salvation from a descendant of King David. Here ‘horn’ symbolizes strength and power. The words ‘he raised a horn of salvation’ means that God sent a strong savior for us. God sent a strong Savior, the Messiah, from the descendant of David, who is Jesus Christ. In ancient days a horn was used for music and signal. They blew horns for victory and march. Jesus proclaimed the day of freedom for the captives and the year of the LORD’s favor. (Is 61:1-2)

The Messiah did not come out of nowhere or appear at random, but from God’s long-term plan and his divine oath which he had sworn with Abraham and many fathers of Israel. The horn of salvation is the fulfillment of God’s promise with his people. Look at verses 70-73. “***(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.***” Since Adam’s Fall, God had promised to send a Messiah from an offspring of a woman. (Ge 3:15) God reaffirmed his promise with Abraham and his children, who were the covenant sons. God established his covenant with his people at Mt. Sinai through Moses that God would be his God and that they would be his people. (Ex 19:5,6) This covenant flowed down to David, who showed a good example as a strong shepherd king. Zechariah believed that the horn of salvation, the strong Savior, would come from a descendant of David. He praised the faithfulness of God and his mercy on his suffering people.

We find two main reasons for the horn of salvation. First, to rescue us from the hands of our enemies. (74). Look at verse 74a, “***to rescue us from the hand of our enemies***,” He said in verse 71, “*salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us--*.” Who are our enemies? To King David, his enemies were the Philistines and King Saul who persistently tried to kill David. But later, his real enemy was the inside of his own heart, covetousness and lying, which destroyed his career as a good king. The real enemies to Zechariah and the people of Israel in Jesus’ day were not the Romans or the foreign powers who had oppressed them for hundred years, but the unbelief and despair in their hearts. Paul said in Ephesians 6:12 that our real enemies are not people or any other system, but the power of darkness and evil spirits. He meant that our enemies are fear, anxiety, despair, pride, greed, hatred and so on which remain in our hearts. It is more difficult to remove the enemies inside than the enemies outside. This is because our enemies inside are invisible, and they always hide in our hearts. We hate them, but we often hide them and breed them until we are deceived by them again.

According to Revelation Satan has seven heads and ten horns. (Rev 12:3) But we don’t have any horns, not even one horn, to resist our enemy Satan. So, people are easily impaled by the horns of Satan. Satan has the horn of fear, hatred, pride, lust, anger, selfishness, anxiety, and so on. Once we are hit by these horns, we become sick and die. There is no remedy for this sickness unless a strong horn of salvation comes. Only the strong horn of salvation can rescue us and heal us. Who is the strong horn of salvation? Yes, he is Jesus.

 How did Jesus rescue us and heal us from the hand of Satan? We are often impaled by the horn of anxiety and become sick. The Dutch philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said that despair is a sickness which leads us to death. When people become anxious, they become fearful, and lose their sound mind and discernment. Jesus continued to teach his fearful disciples to trust in God and trust also in him. Jesus gave them promise, “*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear...your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*.” (Mt 6:25-34) Jesus challenged his anxious disciples with the word of promise. Jesus did not provide much money or gold right away, but he gave them a promise. Jesus helped them to believe his promise. Jesus believed that our strong weapon is our faith in his promise. Jesus raised his horn of salvation through his promise. Therefore, what we can do for our spiritual battle against our enemies is to remember God’s promise and hold it to the end, especially Matthew 6:33 and 28:19-20. Jesus promised to provide all things necessary and to be with us always to the end of the age. Amen!

Second, to enable us to serve God without fear. (74b-75) Look at verses 74b-75. “a***nd to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days***.” The people of Israel in the Old Testament feared God, not because they honored him, but because they sinned against him. They were afraid of judgment and death. But God sent a Savior King Jesus to rescue them from the hand of their enemies and to enable them to serve God without fear. Jesus took away the fear of judgment from them and from us. How did Jesus enable us to serve God without fear? In short Jesus died for our sins and became a sacrifice offering between God and men. Ephesians 2:14-17 says that Jesus destroyed the dividing wall of hostility between God and sinners through his death on the cross. Through faith in Jesus we become children of God.

John said in John 1:12, “*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*” Paul also said in Romans 8:12-17 that we become children of God through faith in the Son Jesus and through the endorsement of the Holy Spirit and that we call God ‘*Abba* Father’ (Ro 8:15) Criminals have fear when they approach the judge and slaves do the same with their master. But children approach their father without fear because they believe in their father’s love. The children believe that their father will receive them. Since we become children of God through faith in Jesus, we have freedom. We come to God and serve him not with fear, but with trust and love. Hebrews encourages us to draw near to the throne of grace with confidence and a sincere heart. (He 4:16, 10:22) Serving God without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days is a blessing, a greater blessing than material blessings or fame. True happiness does not come from possession of this world, but devotion to the Lord Jesus. Amen!

Third, Jesus, the Rising Sun (76-80) Zechariah opened his mouth to praise something about the birth of his son John the Baptist. But he spent most of his song on the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. Now, he had a chance to talk about his son in verses 76-77. “***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 sins***,” The birth of John the Baptist was prophesied by Isaiah in Isaiah 40:3-5 as a voice of one calling in the desert who would prepare the way of the Lord. Indeed, John the Baptist came six months earlier than Jesus and preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. (Mt 3:2, Mk 1:4) It is amazing that we know the way of salvation through the forgiveness of sins. People of this world suggest many ways of salvation, but John teaches us only one way of salvation, which is the forgiveness of sin. John’s message was simple and powerful, “*The kingdom of God is near*! *Repent and believe the good news!*” (Mk 1:15)

After spending only two verses for his son, Zechariah again began to prophesy about Jesus. Look at verses 78-79. “***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.***” The prophet Isaiah prophesied the situation of his people in his days in this, “*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*” (Is 9:2) His prophesy was fulfilled in the day of Zechariah. Historians say that the day of Jesus’ birth was one of the darkest times in Israel’s history. Politically, economically, and spiritually people lived in darkness. Darkness is the absence of light. Those who live in darkness are those who live without God because God is light. The absence of God breeds all kinds of elements of darkness such as fear, anxiety, sorrow, despair, loneliness, and so on. Jesus came as the great light to those who lived in darkness. Zechariah described this great light as the rising sun. When the sun rises, darkness disappears. When Jesus comes into our hearts, the power of darkness disappears.

My younger brother lost his job at the age of 50. He needed to support his sick wife and his only daughter. His life seemed to go nowhere. But he always had hope, saying, “I always dream, even though the dream does not come true.” Every first day of the new year he climbs up to the top of a mountain to see the rising sun. He does not lose his hopes and dreams for the new year. Those who live in darkness think that they have no hope and no future. They despair when they have no faith in God. They see only the problems before them, not God behind them. But our God is the living God who works for us and cares for us. When God visits us, he does not come empty handed, but has hope on the one hand and the future in the other. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “*For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future*.” One woman of God prayed for one man who is struggling with despair. She prayed for him to come out of darkness and to hold the horn of salvation tight. She believes that there is no despair and failure in Jesus Christ who is the Horn of Salvation and the Rising Sun.

This morning I ask you to open your heart and welcome Jesus as your hope and your future. Let him come into your heart and live with you. Then, you will see miracles in your life. You will be healed and you will be alive. You will plan new year with great expectation. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!