Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

22 November 2026

Thankful for God's Best
Text: "His mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, and praised God." *Luke 1:64* from *Luke 1:57-64*.
It was thanksgiving day for Zechariah.
The answer to his prayers had arrived, after many years his wife, Elizabeth, had given birth to a son.
It was the eighth day since his birth and the friends and family had assembled to celebrate the birth and the circumcision of the child.
It was customary to celebrate the birth and the circumcision of the child.
It was customary to name the son after his father Zechariah, but Elizabeth insisted that his name be John.
When they gave a writing tablet to the apparently deaf and mute Zechariah, he wrote on the tablet that the baby's name was to be John.
This was the name the angel had given in the temple when his birth was announced.
When Zechariah obediently wrote down the name John, his tongue was loosed and his ears unstopped.
He broke out into a hymn of praise to the God of Israel as the Holy Spirit filled his being.
We have come to consider his hymn of thanksgiving during this special season of thanksgiving.
It is not surprising that Zechariah was thankful and sang to the Lord; yet, in light of his recent ordeal, we may be surprised to learn what he was most thankful for.
Zechariah had at the top of his list the greatest blessing God ever gave to man.
Zechariah thanked God for the great salvation he was giving to the world through the coming of the one to be born to Mary.
Salvation is God's greatest gift to humankind.
This famous hymn of Zechariah, which has been sung in the church since the early days, can be very instructive to us.
It can help us refresh our memory about God's greatest blessing, about the best that God gives.
Salvation is God's best because of what it reveals in God.
The hymn has been divided into various divisions, but we will not concern ourselves with them.
Rather, we look at the hymn in its wholeness and look for those things that excited Zechariah to thanksgiving concerning the salvation of the Lord being given through the coming Messiah.
For this aged priest, the knowledge of God was rightly held to be the supreme joy of life.
The coming Christ to bring salvation would be above everything else a revelation of God.
His love is revealed in this salvation.
"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he has visited and redeemed his people."
The first line sets forth the nature of this whole passage.
It is an ascription of praise to the Lord God of Israel.
It is blessing him for his blessing.

Everything that follows is to be viewed as a basis for the ascribing of praise to God; note that the very next line begins with “for.”
God has acted to “visit” and “redeem” his people.
“Visit” means that he has come to become involved in humankind’s situation.
He has moved into action.
“Redeem” means that he has come to pay the price required to set people free from their bondage.
It is in his saving work that we see the love and mercy of the Lord God, our God.
His power is revealed.
“And has raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.”
The “horn” of the bull became the symbol of strength and power in the Old Testament.
The “horn” of salvation is then the “power” of salvation.
God’s saving power is revealed in the coming of Jesus into the world and in our receiving his salvation.
We look at the one born to Mary, his life, death, and resurrection, to see the saving power of God.
God’s power to save is seen in Jesus Christ and in his mighty name.
His faithfulness is revealed.
No truth about God is more important than his faithfulness.
It is important to Zechariah that the coming of the Messiah was “as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.”
He saw Christ’s coming as the fulfillment of all of the prophecies beginning with the first one given in *Genesis 3:15*.
Salvation is God’s best because of what it does for humans.
Have you noticed how the aged priest speaks in the plural throughout the hymn?
While the salvation of the Lord is personal, Zechariah is fully aware that it includes others.
He is celebrating God’s saving activity toward all of his people.
We need to keep this note in our praise to God.
Let us look for the different aspects of this salvation that are suggested in the hymn.
The salvation of the Lord frees from bondage.
It gives freedom.
“For he has visited and redeemed his people.”
The outcome of redemption is freedom.
Redemption is what God does, but liberty is what believers receive.
This freedom is spiritual freedom from the bondage of sin and Satan.
Zechariah may have had in mind some political enemies as he sang his hymn to the Lord, but surely at the deeper level he has in mind the destructive bondage that sin has brought to humankind.
The salvation of the Lord forgives us for our transgressions.

Zechariah says that John’s ministry is to be giving “knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.”
John is to declare the message of salvation.
As people came to know Jesus and to believe on him, they would know the remission of their sins.
John fist identified him as the “lamb” that takes away the sins of the world.”
If you are saved, you are forgiven.
The salvation of the Lord gives hope to humankind.
“Whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”
This dayspring is the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world as the Light of the World.

As the Light of the World, he brings hope to those who sit in the darkness of despair.
The only people who really have hope are those who have been saved by the mighty Savior.
The salvation of the Lord also brings peace.
Zechariah explains the dayspring's purpose: "To guide our feet into the way of peace."
As the Light of the World, Jesus so guides his people.
This is most interesting.
He does not give an experience of peace but rather leads us into the way of peace.
Walking under his lordship leads to blessed personal peace.
Can you not see why Zechariah considered this to be God's greatest blessing to humankind?
Sure, God had given him a son, a good wife, and long life, but salvation is so much more than these.
God had met all of his physical needs, but salvation is so much more.
God may have withheld some of his blessings from you, but if he has saved you, he has given you the best.
To know that Jesus is your creator is a great insight and an important thing to know.
To know that Jesus is your sustainer is equally important.
To know that Jesus is your sovereign is also significant.
But the greatest truth about Jesus that you can ever know is that Jesus is Savior.
Unless you know this, you will never be free from the bondage and the burden of sin, you will never know the heart of God.
To know his creation is to know his hand.
To know his sovereignty is to know his throne.
To know his salvation is to know his heart.
Do you know Jesus as Savior?
Then you should praise him all of your days.
Do you want to know him as Savior?
Then call on him.
He has promised to save all who call to him.
Call out to him in prayer right now.
He waits at the door for an invitation to come in and make his abode with you.