

Luke Chapter 1 v 67 - 80

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[0 : 00] Lovely to see you, I'd love to welcome you, particularly those who are visiting us, we welcome you. I'd love to have you with us and trust that today you might, this morning and this afternoon is our carol service as you know, 4 o'clock.

So I hope that you might be able to come to that as well. But I hope that as you're getting ready for Christmas, as you're preparing, that your thoughts are not just taken up with trees and presents and food and all those things.

But I trust that your thoughts are taken up with the Lord Jesus Christ and his coming into this world. And our verse there on the screen reminds us of that very first Christmas evening when the angels came to share the good news with the shepherds.

And the angels said to them, don't be afraid, I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

Joy for all the people. And our first carol is one that speaks of those very words. Joy to the world, the Lord has come. 311. Let's stand and sing.

[1 : 06] 311. 311. 311. 311. 311. 311. 311. 311.

311. 311. 311. 311. 311. 411.

411. 411. 411. 411. 511. 511.

511. 511. 511. 611.

411. 511. 511. 511. 511. 514.

[2 : 20] The sound of joy. For more sins and sorrows go.

The fountain has the crown. He comes to make his blessings go.

For us the curse is done. For us the curse is done. For us the curse is done.

He rules the world into that grace. And aims the nations prove.

The glory is all on his righteous face. The wonders of his love. The wonders of his love.

[3 : 22] The wonders of his love. The wonders of his love. The wonders of his love. The wonders of his love.

It is a great joy. For us to know that our Lord Jesus Christ. The son of God. Has come into this world. And that we are able to wonder. At his love for us.

It is a wonder. An amazing thing. That he should love us. Soon as though we are. And a wonderful thing. That we can draw near to him. And approach him. And speak with him. This God is knowable to us.

Through Jesus Christ. So let's come to him in prayer. And let's all pray together. Our gracious and loving heavenly father. We thank you.

For the opportunity that we have. And the freedom that we have. To come. And speak with you. And meet with you. Thank you that you are the God. Who came down to us.

[4 : 20] In your son. The Lord Jesus Christ. You knew. Too well. That we could never ever. Climb up to you. Or approach you. Lord we cannot.

Come to you. Or build a bridge to you. Or make a ladder to you. Lord we are just. That's impossible. You had to come down to us. And we thank you that. Through Jesus.

We have come to know. You our God. Our friend. Our father. Our savior. Our Lord. We thank you that in Jesus. We have God with us.

Emmanuel. Thank you that in Jesus. We have God. Coming to where we are. Coming down into the mud. And the mire. Coming down to the. To the sorrow. And the struggling.

And the difficulties of life. We have God who. Has descended amongst us. Condescended to become one with us. For Lord Jesus Christ. We. We wonder at the marvel. The mystery.

[5 : 15] Which is. That you are both God and man. That you are fully divine. And fully human. Lord we can't take it on. We can't comprehend it. But we know it's true. We know that.

You walked amongst us. As a human being. And yet you still were. And always have been the son of God. We thank you that. Oh Lord. You not only lived amongst us.

But you knew what it was to endure sorrow. And grief. You know what it is to go through heartache. You know what it is to go through loss. And grief. And Lord most of all. We know that you know what it means to go through pain.

For there on the cross. When you suffered and died. You endured such a pain. Such suffering. Physically yes. But Lord more than that. Within your very soul.

Within your very heart. You suffered the very. The very. The very. The very punishment of our sins. You suffered in our place. You tasted of hell for us.

[6 : 14] That we might enjoy heaven with you. We thank you Lord Jesus. That that wasn't the end. That wasn't the end. But Lord that you rose again. That you conquered sin and death. So that we may have the assurance.

And the confidence. That death is nothing to be feared. For those who put their faith in you. That death is not. Something which we have to. To not talk about. But death is something.

Oh Lord. Which you have triumphed over. And we too. Because you rose from the dead. We too shall rise from the dead. We too shall live forever more. The gift of everlasting life.

You've given to us. And we thank you for these truths. That oh Lord. You are here. This morning. By your Holy Spirit. You're here to. To encourage us. And to comfort us.

To strengthen us. To give to us that faith. Which leans upon you. And trusts in you. To give us that sense of your presence. And nearness. And so we pray. Lord come down amongst us.

[7 : 10] Come and be with us. And help us. Lord at this time. That we may hear you speaking. And we may respond to your words. Of life. With faith and obedience.

We thank you then. That this is God with us. May we know. That reassurance. And confidence. Not just today. But in the days to come. Not just the days of Christmas.

But in the new year ahead. May we be certain and sure. That Christ is with us. For we ask these things again. Our Father and God. In the name of Jesus your Son. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So. Amen. Amen.

[8 : 05] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. In a manger for his bed Where he was the part of my Jesus Christ, the little child He came down to earth from heaven Who is God and not all And his shelter was a stable And his cradle was a storm In the poor and mean and lowly Made on earth a Savior holy

And through all his wondrous strattles He would honor and obey The land watched the lonely mother In whose gentle hearts he lay Christian children hold us deep Mild who we can do God's feet For he is our childhood's pattern Day by day my mercy grew He was little weep and helpless Tears and swath by dust he knew

And he kneeleth for our sadness And he shareth in our goodness And our eyes on the shall see him Who is all redeeming blood For that child so dear and gentle Is our Lord in heaven above And he leads his children on To the place where he is born Lord in heaven above And he kneeleth for our sin He is the only one He is the only one He is the only one With the old sin standing high

We shall see him God in heaven Set at most At most At hand of night When thy souls his children crown Lord in heaven shall we turn around We're going to read together now from our Bibles And if you'd like to find Luke and chapter one And if you've got one of the church Bibles That's page 1026 Page 1026 Luke chapter one Last Sunday morning and evening We were looking at How Luke prepares for the coming of Christ And he does that by pointing us to Zachariah and Elizabeth These two elderly folk

Who had no children But who God promised would have a son Who we know of course to be John the Baptist But Luke in preparing for Christ Wants us to spend a lot of time A lot of attention Upon the coming of John the Baptist first To prepare the way And last week we looked at The promise that Zachariah received From the angel Gabriel But we're going to read from verse 57 Of Luke chapter one That's the birth of John the Baptist And then the prophetic song That Zachariah sings As at the birth of his son So Luke in chapter one Beginning at verse 57 Page 1026 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby She gave birth to a son Her neighbours and relatives heard That the Lord had shown her great mercy And they shared her joy On the eighth day

[13:17] They came to circumcise the child And they were going to name him After his father Zachariah But his mother spoke up and said No, he is to be called John They said to her There is no one among your relatives Who has that name Then they made signs to his father To find out what he would like to name the child Remember that Zachariah was deaf and dumb Because he didn't believe the promise of God Zachariah, he asked for Verse 63 He asked for a writing tablet And to everyone's astonishment He wrote His name is John Immediately his mouth was opened And his tongue set free And he began to speak Praising God All the neighbours were filled with awe Throughout the hill country of Judea People were talking about all these things Everyone who heard this wondered about it Asking What then is this child going to be?

For the Lord's hand was with him His father Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit And prophesied Praise be to the Lord The God of Israel Because he has come to his people And redeemed them He has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of his servant David 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 To rescue us from the hand of our enemies And to enable us to serve him without fear In holiness and righteousness Before him all our days 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 their sins 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 Well we'll think about those words In a few moments But if men Let's sing a hymn A wonderful hymn 217 217 Thou who was rich beyond all splendour All for love's sake Became poor 217 Let's stand as we sing A wonderful hymn To Tanzania 297 2993 5093 on the 200 The End

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The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End If you have a Bible to hand, it will be helpful if you can turn up to that reading that we read from Luke in chapter 1, the last part of Luke chapter 1.

- [18 : 21] It's a long chapter, 80 verses, but those verses 57 through to 79, and particularly where we've got those words of Zachariah's song, the birth of his son, who we know to be John the Baptist.

Well, of course, Christmas means visiting. It means us visiting relatives. Ange and I and John are going down back to Devon tomorrow for a couple of days to see our son and his wife.

And some of you have come up perhaps to visit relatives. Some of our folk are away even at the moment because they're visiting friends and relatives of others. And it's not only us going, of course, to visit others, but others come and visit us, which is great.

And they'll come and pop in. Perhaps neighbours might pop in. But the visitors who come to our house come into two sort of categories, don't they?

There's those that we're prepared for and expecting. In other words, perhaps family or people who've rung up and said, oh, we've organised a meal or organised an opportunity for them to come round and pop in.

- [19 : 27] And those that we're not expecting, those that sort of come all of a sudden, come unannounced, come just to ring the doorbell. And that's not a bad thing necessarily, unless, of course, they're coming to stay.

And we don't know that. And they just turn up and say, oh, lovely, we're going to be here for three days. Oh, really? That's nice. Because the letter got lost in the post or the email got eaten by something or whatever it may be.

They catch us unawares. And, of course, even if they're just coming round for a cup of tea or a coffee, there's a little bit of a flap, isn't there, that goes on in the kitchen. And they go, well, can I get them to eat?

Have you got any cake? No, I've eaten the last bit last night. And there's a bit of a panic that sets in. Preparation. Getting ready for the unexpected.

Getting ready for the surprise. Getting ready for what we don't see coming, as it were, a long time in advance. Well, as I said before, Luke chapter 1 is Luke preparing us for the coming of Jesus.

- [20 : 28] He spends his 80 verses preparing us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. And we saw last week about how, particularly, Luke is the only one who talks about Zachariah and Elizabeth.

This other child. This other special birth. And there's so many similarities between the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus. Angel Gabriel announcing the birth. And it being a miraculous birth.

Because Elizabeth was well into old age. And had never had children before. But particularly, of course, pointing us to John the Baptist. Because John the Baptist was the one who was going to prepare the way.

Prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. We see that there in verse 76. When Zachariah speaks about you, my child. He's talking to John, his son. Will be called a prophet of the Most High.

For you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him. Prepare the way for him. Prepared. Are we prepared for Christ coming?

- [21 : 28] And what does it mean that he's coming into the world? We saw that God is giving a gift. As he gives all of his gifts because of his grace. If you remember Elizabeth.

When she found out she was pregnant. She was absolutely delighted. And she said, in these days God has shown his grace to me. Or his favour to me. Grace is undeserved.

It's not something that we have sort of got from God. Because we're good people. And done good things for him. Grace is all about God giving undeserving people wonderful gifts.

And that's the way God is. He's not a God who says, right. You give me this and I'll give you that. Or you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. It's not about anything that we can do. To earn from God any blessing.

Any goodness. It's all about what he has done for us. It's all of his grace. And his love alone. And so now this child who is a gift of grace.

[22 : 28] John the Baptist. To Elizabeth. Is born. His birth takes place. We're not told about where it took place. Or what happened. Except that he's born and he's healthy. And is well.

He's coming to prepare the way for Jesus. For Jesus Christ. Let's look just for a moment at these events.

Let's just look at a moment at this birth of John the Baptist. Before we look at what Jesus is all about. Because we see him a bit later on. What we learn from the birth of John the Baptist is this. That God is always prepared.

God is never caught off guard. God is never surprised. God is never caught on the wrong foot. God is never in a position where he is not ready. And knows what's going on.

We know that. Because of course the birth of John the Baptist. Was just as God had said he would do. Right the way back. Earlier on. God promised. That he would give a son to Zachariah.

[23 : 27] And to Elizabeth. And God kept his word. His timing was perfect. And the boy was born. And what a great source of joy it was. For both Zachariah and Elizabeth.

And for everybody in fact. We read there in verse 58. Her neighbours and relatives. Heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy. Similar to grace. And they shared her joy.

Well it's a lovely thing isn't it? No doubt even today. As we just said before. Frederick and Janet. And Tim and his wife are rejoicing at the birth of a little girl. Great. And if you can remember when your children or grandchildren were born.

What a thrill it is. What a joy it is. When all goes well. They had received this boy. Because God told them to expect him. God told them all the way back.

Nine months earlier. That you're to expect a child. That you're to expect a son. Everything that God does. He does. Because he's prepared.

[24 : 30] Everything that God does. He does. Because he says. That he will do it. God doesn't tell us everything about every single situation. But what God has said in his word.

Teaches us. That he works in this way. He works according to his promises. He works according to his word. To what he says. We often speak about. They're a man of their word.

Or a woman of their word. In other words. When they say they're going to do something. They do it. Of course the truth is. That for many of us. We make promises. We say. Well I hope to be able to do that.

And I hope to be able to be there. Yes I will. But then things happen. Things out of our control. Things that we just cannot. Prevent from happening. Crash into our lives. And we don't keep our word.

We fail to keep our promises. Or else more often is the case. We just forget. Don't we? God's not like us. God's completely different to us. When he says he's going to do something.

- [25 : 28] He does it. When he promises he's going to do something. He knows all the possibilities as it were. Of what can happen. He's not taken by surprise. And he keeps his word.
- That's why it's so important for us to know God's word. That's why he's given us the Bible. It's full of his promises. It's full of his truths. That teach us that we need not be surprised also.
- We need not be taken by surprise. By the things that happen in our lives. When we know God's word and his promises. And we believe his word and his promises.
- That they help us to cope with the unexpected events in life. Because although God knows what he's doing. And God is prepared for everything. We aren't.
- But his promises assure us. That in both the good things and the bad things. The unexpected things. There is enough help for us.
- [26 : 26] There is enough grace for us. All of us at times go through surprisingly bad times. Things come breaking into our lives.
- I don't know if you saw on the news. I think it was a little while ago. About a couple who were in bed upstairs. And somebody I think. I'm not sure.
- But somebody had lost control of their car. Or lorry or something. They've gone crashing into their house. It was a bit of a surprise. It demolished the front of the house. Thankfully they were in the back of the house.
- In their bedroom. And they weren't hurt. But sometimes that's how it feels. Doesn't it? Something comes crashing into our lives. It's an illness that's happened to us. Or something that's.
- A redundancy that's happened to us. Or a huge bill that comes to the post. Or where the car blows up. Or what. Something happens. It completely takes us by surprise.
- [27 : 22] And yet the Bible tells us. That we're not pretty surprised. When difficulties happen. When bad things happen. Peter writes to the Christians. In the first century. And he says this. Dear friends.
- Do not be surprised. At the fiery ordeal. That has come on you. To test you. As though something strange. Were happening to you. The things that happen to us. Are part of life.
- God knows about them. We may not be aware of them. But when we know. That God is in control. When we know that God is prepared. When we know that God. Is with us. Then those things.
- Need not overwhelm us. Because often that's what happens. Isn't it? Something happens to us. In such a way. That it overwhelms us. We feel broken by it. We feel even as though.
- Our faith is lost by it. How can I trust you God. When you allow this to happen. How can I trust you God. When this has happened to me. But again. Jesus promised his disciples.
- [28 : 17] In Luke 6. In John 16 rather. He said to them. In this world. You will have trouble. He doesn't promise us. That life is going to be easy. He doesn't promise us. That when we follow him.
- It's all going to be a smooth ride. He promises us. There's going to be problems. But when we trust in him. When we know that he is in control. When we know that he is with us.
- Then we need not be overwhelmed. By these things. They need not rob us. Of our faith in him. They need not make us doubt him. But then it's the same on the other side.
- If we took the boot on the other foot. Haven't we known times of great encouragement. And blessing in our lives. Haven't we been surprised by joy. Something has happened. Somebody has done something.

Or something has happened. We may have received a rise. Or promotion. Or we've passed our qualifications. Or we've done really well at something. And it's a joy. It's a delight. Something surprisingly good has happened.

[29 : 15] We've been full of praise to God. And thanksgiving to God. We've rejoiced with God. And though those pleasant surprises are much more welcome.

If I can put it that way. Than the unpleasant surprises. Yet in one sense we shouldn't be surprised. Because in every way God has promised us good things. Promised us blessings.

Paul writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians. And chapter 9 he says. God is able to bless you abundantly. In fact that's the very heart of God. That's the very desire of God.

He wants us to be blessed. He wants us to be those who rejoice in him. It's interesting that. I didn't know what John was necessarily going to say.

In the children's talk. But he picked out this verse. Jesus says in Matthew chapter 6. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. And all these things will be given unto you.

[30 : 10] What's all the things he's talking about? He's talking about very physical things. Food and clothing and shelter. He's talking about the things that we need. The good things that we enjoy in life. God says I'm going to give you all those things.

I'm going to provide all those things for you. So we can be surprised. But God is not surprised. Because God is prepared.

God has all things in hand. Dear friends. If you are a Christian this morning. If you know and have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then God has your life in hand. The things that come into your life.

The good things. The sad things. Whatever they may be. They need not rock you. Or rock your world. Or knock you off. Of course. You can continue to trust him. Because he is prepared.

Well there was a surprise. A very pleasant surprise. In one sense. Wasn't there here in the birth of John? One of the surprises was about his name. Do you see that there?

[31 : 06] On the eighth day. As was the law of the land. The law of God's law. Was that the son was to be circumcised. And given his name. They were going to name him Zachariah.

Because that was quite often the case. You gave the name of the father to the son. Or one of the relatives. Or the grandfather and so on. But Elizabeth says. No. He used to be called John.

Well they said. Well you haven't got any relatives called John. Why do you that? And they spoke to the father. To Zachariah. And he says. On a chalkboard as it were.

His name is to be John. Great surprise. But that wasn't a surprise to John or Elizabeth. Was it? Because again. Gabriel. The angel had said.

You're to name him John. That's the name you're to give him. Very specific. Just as. Remember the angel Gabriel told. Mary and Joseph. You're to give him the name Jesus. There's another surprise.

[32 : 02] Isn't there as well. That takes place here. And that's of course. That Zachariah. Who hasn't spoken for nine months. Must have been nice for Elizabeth. Now speaks. He hasn't said a word.

Nine months. He's been quiet. He's never answered back. He's never moaned or complained. None of those things that husbands do. And now after nine months.

Bang. Suddenly. Immediately we're told. Verse 64. His mouth was open. His tongue set free. Began to speak. Praising God. Neighbours. Filled with awe. But again.

That's exactly what God had said. Through the angel Gabriel. Because. Because. Zachariah hadn't believed God's promise. And said. What's going on. This can't happen. Sort of thing.

Gabriel said. I'm going to give you evidence. Proof. That I'm from God. And this is going to happen. You're not going to speak for the next nine months. And that's exactly. What happened. Yeah.

[32 : 58] Surprises. Some of us like surprises. When it's our birthday. Or an anniversary. Quite a few of us don't like surprises. Do we? We like to have things ordered.

And in control. We like to know what's going on. We like to have our hand. Upon the steering wheel. As it were. Upon the tiller. But again. It's a great source of our comfort and joy.

That knowing that. God will work according to his promises. According to his word. According to what he said. Well let's move on then.

To this song of Zachariah. Because in this song of Zachariah. We have some wonderful truths. About what God does. How God works. And what Christ came to do.

You might expect that Zachariah. If he was going to sing a song. At the birth of his son. Would sing a song about his son. Wouldn't he? I don't know some of you musical people. Poetry people. I know there was one.

[33 : 55] One father here. He sang a song at his daughter's wedding. But there's others as well. You know. Maybe you wrote a poem. When your child was born.

Or wrote them a song. Or a letter. Or whatever it may be. And you would think. Well. If he's going to write this song. Or sing this song. It's going to be all about John. But actually. It's not all about John at all. It's not all about. There's only one little bit.

And that's that bit in verse 76. That we read before. 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. The rest of the song.

Is about the Lord Jesus Christ. And what God is going to do. Through the Lord Jesus Christ. The song is devoted to him. And in that song. We learn so much.

It's a song. Not that Zachariah made. Isn't it? It's a song that the Holy Spirit of God. Placed within his heart. And on his lips. To sing. And to speak out. About Jesus. And so that's exactly what he says.

[34 : 51] As he talks about him. Praise be. To the Lord. The God of Israel. Because he has come. To his people. Looking forward to the very birth. Of the Lord Jesus. He has come.

To redeem. His people. And what we see of course again. Is like all that God does. The Lord Jesus Christ. Comes. Because. That's what he's been prepared for.

That's the whole of history. He's been preparing. For this moment. In time. When the Christ. The Son of God. Would come. Everything. From the very moment of creation. Was looking forward to.

Those thousands of years later. When the Son of God. Would step. On the planet. Step. On the earth. In human form. Zachariah acknowledges that fact.

Doesn't he? Verse 70. As he said. Through his holy prophets. Of long. Ago. That's why we need the Old Testament. As well as the New Testament. That's why it's one complete book. Because it's one book.

[35 : 49] That speaks all about Jesus Christ. It talks about him. The Old Testament is looking forward to him coming. And what he's going to do. What he's going to accomplish. And what's going to change in the world.

And the New Testament is all about those changes taking place. And transforming the world. And of course when we come to Christmas time. There's several particular prophets and promises of God.

Considering Jesus that we think of. Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14. The Lord himself will give us a sign. The virgin will be with child. Will give birth to a son.

And you will call him Emmanuel. Which means as you know. God with us. Later on in Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6. For to us a child is born. To us a son is given.

The government will be upon his shoulders. He will be called Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. But all the way through.

[36 : 46] From Genesis. All the way through the books of Moses. All the way through the history books. All the way through the poetic books. Of the Psalms. And Proverbs. All the way through the prophecies.

Both the major prophets and the minor prophets. It's all about looking forward to Jesus coming. Because as we read through there. We find not just that the prophets.

Like Isaiah and the others. Speak about God sending the Christ. But even before that. David was promised. That there would be a king to sit upon his throne. Before that Moses promised.

God will raise up a prophet like me. In these days. But even before that. Abraham. Promised and assured. That from you. Will come one who will be a blessing.

To all the nations. Before Abraham. Go right back to the Garden of Eden. And of course. Even way back before that. Before the creation of the world. The Bible tells us.

[37 : 43] God was preparing to send his son. Into the world. Here's Peter again. 1 Peter chapter 1. He. Speaking of Jesus. Was chosen before the creation of the world.

But was revealed to you in these last times. For your sake. All of life. All of history. All of the world.

And everything that has happened. Has all been God fulfilling. And carrying out his preparations. For the coming of Christ. To be the saviour of the world. Let me say this as well for a moment.

Then that's what's happened in your life. All through your life. God has been preparing you. To come to faith in Christ. God has been speaking to you.

Making himself known to you. Putting Christians in your pathway. Bringing people. Knocking on your door. Things that you've read. Teachers you had at school.

[38 : 41] All these things. God has been at work. Preparing you to come. To faith in Christ. In himself. But what about this Jesus Christ?

What about this Jesus Christ? Well there's two things. Two important things. That Zachariah's song raises for us. About Jesus. He is prepared. He is prepared.

First of all. With power. To save us from our enemies. Christ is prepared with power. To save us from our enemies. There's a strange phrase. That's used here in verse 69.

And unless you happen to read your Bible a lot. And read the Psalms. Then you think. What's this? What's this phrase? He has raised up a horn of salvation for us. And if you read in the Psalms.

And the Old Testament. You realize that a horn of salvation. Is a mighty warrior. A horn is a symbol of great strength. And power. Of something. Something that overcomes.

[39 : 41] In battle. And so on. That's why in Psalm. Psalm 18. Verse 2. The Lord is my rock. My fortress.

My deliverer. He is the horn of my salvation. My stronghold. Why do we need somebody strong and mighty to come into the world?

And in fact when we look at the Lord Jesus Christ. Especially in his birth. We see. And people delight in him being so meek and mild. And little. And gentle. And all those sort of things.

But actually the Bible speaks of him coming. As the horn of salvation. Coming with power. To save us from our enemies. From the hand of those who hate us. We need somebody strong.

Because as human beings. We have terrible enemies. All of us have awful enemies. And we are weak and powerless against those enemies. They will conquer us.

[40 : 36] And have conquered us. Throughout every generation. They are enemies. But they are not human enemies. Not human adversaries. They are spiritual. There is the devil.

There is sin. And there is death. But when Christ comes. He comes to conquer and overcome those enemies. Those enemies that destroy life.

Those enemies that rob us. Of the good things that God has in store for us. Those enemies that deceive us. And lie to us. And take us down. Those roots of self-destruction.

But when Christ came. He came as the mighty one. Able to save us completely. And utterly. For the writer in Hebrews says in chapter 7. Therefore. He is able to save completely.

Those who come to God through him. Sin is an awful enemy of humanity. And of course one of the sad things. This Christmas. Is that we see. That sin.

[41 : 35] That human propensity. That human desire. To please itself. To do those things. Which are self-gratifying. Comes out to the fore. More than any other time of the year.

Probably. But what does it bring? Does it bring real happiness. And peace. And joy. Does it bring a real sense of contentment. To the world. No it brings misery.

And suffering. And sorrow. And grief. And debt. And all those things. And don't we know in our own lives. How often we have sought to please ourselves. So often in our own lives.

We've gone the way that we wanted to. In spite of what we know. Was what God wants. In spite of what we know. Is what God's word says. And haven't we eaten the bitter fruit of that.

Selfishness. Haven't we grieved. And mourned. Over the fact that in our lives. We thought we knew better than God. And all that we found.

[42 : 30] Is that we know. Nothing at all. Jesus has come to save us from those enemies. To rescue us from them. To deliver us from them. And he has come with power.

But he has come as well with light. He is prepared. And he is coming with light. Look at verses 78 and 9. Because of the tender mercy of God. By which the rising sun will come to us from heaven.

So he's not talking about the ordinary sun. Is he? He must be talking about somebody else. The rising sun will come to us from heaven. And we know again. This is a prophecy. From the Old Testament. From the very last book of the Old Testament.

Malachi. From Malachi it says. The sun. S-U-N. Of righteousness. Will rise. With healing in its wings. Speaking about Jesus.

He's the sun of righteousness. Brilliant in his light. Because not only do we find ourselves. Engaged in this battle. With our sinful nature. That sinful selfishness.

[43 : 29] Which leads us away from God. But we find ourselves also. As human beings. In a place of terrible darkness. This is the devil's work. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 4.

The God of this age. The devil. Has blinded the minds of those who do not believe. So they cannot see the light of the gospel. Of the glory of God. Perhaps you're here this morning.

As somebody who has not seen Jesus. As he truly is. You're someone who has not seen your sin. As that desperate enemy. That is destroying and robbing you. Of peace with God.

Perhaps you're someone who's never seen. That you'll need to repent of your sins. And put your faith in Jesus. And you've never seen it. And the reason you've never seen it. Is because the devil has blinded your eyes.

The God of this age. Has put a dark veil over you. And we see it obviously. We see it obviously. In those extreme terrorists. Whose minds are so darkened.

[44 : 26] That they commit acts of atrocity. Against families and children. And all sorts of things. But we can't see it for ourselves. Can we? We can see it in others. But we can't see it for.

Well they're the wicked people. They're the evil people. They're the people who deserve God's anger. And judgment and wrath. But in me. I'm quite a nice person. I've sought to live my life. In a reasonably good way. And I know I've done a few things wrong.

But we're darkened. We're darkened to the reality. That what stands before us. Is judgment. That we must stand before God. One day. And he must judge us. As to how we have lived.

And if he is righteous and just. As he truly is. Then he will punish us for eternity. For those sins. For that rebellion against him. For that rejection of him.

And we don't see it. We don't want to see it of course. And the devil blinds us from it. And we don't see of course. The wonder and the truth. Is that our Lord Jesus Christ.

[45 : 22] Came into the world to rescue from that. Rescue us from the judgment we deserve. Rescue us from the. From the. From the. The just anger of God. That is upon us because of our sin.

We don't see that. And so we continue in our own blind way. Living our lives. Thinking that we're okay. Hoping that we're good enough. That one day we'll get to. Before God. And God will say. Yes well. Yes you've done a few things wrong.

But actually you're quite a nice person. You can come into heaven. God is not going to say that. Or that I've done all these things God. I've been so religious. And I've been so faithful. In saying my prayers.

And I've been so good. In trying to help others. That surely that outweighs my bad things. No God won't say that. Because they cannot. You cannot wipe away your own sin. You cannot take away.

The sin that you have committed. Only Christ can do that. And when Jesus Christ is received as our saviour. He bursts into our lives.

[46 : 18] As the sun bursts over the horizon. He brings light to us in darkness. He's the one who said. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me.

Will never walk in darkness. But have the light of life. He's the one that makes the clouds to run away. He's the one that shines the life. And the love of God into our hearts. And he brings us out of the dominion of darkness.

And brings us into the kingdom of light. Have you seen. Have your eyes. Have your eyes perceived. Perceived the light of Christ. Have you seen the darkness that you're in.

Have you seen the light he brings. Have you seen the love. And the life that he wants to bring to you. However weak we are. However broken we are. By the sin.

And the brokenness of this world. Christ is more powerful. And strong enough to lift us up. And to rescue us. No matter how we've been darkened and blinded. No matter how we've been misled and lied to.

[47 : 16] Christ is the light that is able to break in. And bring us truth. But why has he done these things. Why has Christ come with power. And why does he come with light.

He comes to prepare us for God. He comes to make us ready for God. Look at what. Look at what. Again. Zacharias says in his glorious.

Song of praise. Verse 74. To rescue us from the hand of our enemies. And to enable us to serve him. That's God. Without fear. In holiness and righteousness.

Before him. All our days. If life without Christ. Is a life of sin and of darkness. Then life with Christ. Is a life of holiness and righteousness.

If life without Christ. Is a life in separation from God. And under the judgment of God. Then life with Christ. Is a life in fellowship with God.

[48 : 11] And in relationship with him. That's why Jesus came. To prepare us for God. To change us. To transform us. So that we do not stay the same.

We don't just continue in the way that we are. That's the wonderful thing about being a Christian. The wonderful thing about receiving Christ. Is not simply saying. Well here's your ticket to heaven. Now you're forgiven.

Now that you can go to heaven. And just carry on living the way you've lived. To be a Christian. To know Christ. Is to know our lives transformed and changed. So that instead of going our way. We go God's way. Instead of serving to please ourselves.

We serve to please him. Holiness and righteousness. You see there's no way to live before God. Who is holy. Except in holiness. God is pure.

He is perfect. He is spotless. He is sinless. There's nothing in him to mar him. But we are sinful and selfish. And self-serving and seeking. And our hearts are desperately dark and evil.

[49 : 10] How can those two things come together? How can God have anything to do with us? He can't unless we are transformed and changed. That's what Christ has come to do. Taking away our sin.

And he makes us holy. In the sight of God. Because we cannot please God. And do what he has done. Do what he commands us in his word. Christ has done it for us.

He is perfect righteousness. And he gives that to us as well. So as we come into the presence of God now. As those who've trusted in Christ. We are holy and righteous in his sight.

Not perfect. But accepted and loved. Set free from the power of sin. Set free to live as Christ desires. What would be the point of Jesus coming into the world.

And dying for us. And rescuing us from hell and judgment. If it had no effect upon our lives now. What would be the point? We are helpless. What? That would be rubbish.

[50 : 09] But he hasn't done that. And so I need to say to you dear friends again. This truth. You may say. Well I think I'm a Christian. And I think I'm going to heaven.

Or I hope I am. And I think I've trusted in Christ. But the big question is this. Are you changed? Are you different? Are you still living the same old way?

Going through the same routine? Still pleasing yourself? Then dear friends. I have to say to you. You aren't changed. You haven't become a Christian. You haven't received Christ. Because there's a transformation that takes place.

In the very life of who you are. Which says. I want to go that way of holiness. I want to go that way of righteousness. What's the outcome of all of that?

It's that lovely, lovely verse. It's that lovely phrase. At the very end of verse 79. To shine on those living in darkness. In the shadow of death. To guide our feet into the path of peace.

[51 : 09] Peace. Isn't the greatest need of our nation. The greatest need of our world. Peace. But it can't be won by. Negotiation.

Can't be won by. Force. Power. Or war. Peace only comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. When we know him.

We walk in peace. We walk in peace with God. No longer are we in rebellion against him. But he's our father and our friend. No longer do we walk in bad relationship with one another.

Because he brings us peace with one another. Peace between men and women. Peace between whatever background we're from. Whatever language we speak. Whatever problems our forefathers have had.

But he especially brings us into peace with ourselves. That we can love ourselves for who we are in Christ. Accept ourselves for who we are in Christ. We don't have to be those that fit a particular description of what we see in a magazine.

[52 : 17] We don't have to be someone who has that amount of money to be acceptable. And have made it in our lives. We have peace with ourselves. Because we have peace with God. Let me ask you as we close dear friends.

Are you prepared for Christ? Are you prepared to receive him? Are you prepared to acknowledge him as your saviour? As the one who is your strength and power?

The one who is your light? See Jesus was prepared to go to the great lengths of not only being born into this world. But dying upon a cross. He was prepared to suffer in such a way that he might rescue you.

That he might bring you into that peace that you are searching for and can never find anywhere else. Will you receive him?

Are you prepared to accept him on his terms as your saviour? It's said of Jesus in John chapter 1 verse 11. He came to that which was his own.

[53 : 18] But his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name. He gave the right to become children of God.

Let's pray together. We thank you and praise you again, our God, that you have told us these things.

So that we might be prepared and ready and not caught by surprise. What a tragedy it will be on that day of judgment. When many, many, many, many, oh Lord.

Will be shocked to find that they stand before the judgment seat of God. Many will be shocked with a horrible, terrible shock of hearing those words of Jesus the judge.

Depart from me, you wicked, into the place prepared for you. Oh Lord, thank you that you tell us these things because you want to rescue us from them. So that we might be ready and prepared.

[54 : 19] So that rather than, Lord, walk in blindness and darkness all our lives and into death, we might walk in the light of your truth, knowing that you have taken our sin away and forgiven us.

That we might rather stand before you on that day of judgment. Yes, knowing that we have sinned, but knowing that you are our atoning sacrifice. That you are the one who has taken our sins away.

And hearing those words, rather than depart, come and enter into the joy of your Lord. Please, oh Lord, let us be prepared. Let us receive you and trust you.

Let us follow you and walk in your light. Oh Lord, help us, we pray, day by day. Be men and women whose lives are marked with holiness and righteousness. For in these things we show that we belong to you.

Amen. For me. Let us pray, day by day.

[55 : 39] In these things we stone them our lives weee. For me. Men by day. Therefore we name in■■■■■st, for us we and our struggle are beginning will be.

All in eternity Welcome to the heart for Jesus There is room in the heart for thee The fox is the breast Where the birds are nest In the shade of the sea The tree And the earth was the bed For thy weary head In the deserts of Galilee Welcome to the heart for Jesus There is room in thy heart for thee From the heavens the Lord And the mealy bird That should set thy people free

But in all he's gone And in all the fall They brought thee to Calvary Go down to my heart for Jesus Thy cross is my only king When the righteous bring that the Christ shall sing At thy God into victory That the Christ of the home Sing it There is room There is room at my sight for thee That thy God shall rejoice For Jesus For the promise and promise For thee Now to him who is able To keep you from falling

And to present you before his glorious presence Without fault and with great joy To the only God our Saviour Be glory and majesty Power and authority Through Jesus Christ Our Lord Before all ages Now and forevermore Amen Amen