**JESUS, THE HORN OF SALVATION**

December 10, 2017

Luke 1:67-80

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

If we gather all historians of the world together in one place, and ask them a question, “What was the greatest event in history?” what would they say? Some would say the fall of Babylon, the fall of the Roman Empire or World War II. Or maybe some would say it is the invention of something, like the wheel, or electricity, or the computer, internet. The most monumental event in all of human history was when God came into the world. It was when Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of the Most High, was born. History recognizes that one supreme event with B.C., Before Christ, and A.D., Anno Domini, the year of our Lord, meaning after Christ’s coming. The great event of world history that rises above everything else like Everest is the event which has been most profoundly influential, most impactful, most shaping of all human history, and that is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, into the world to provide salvation and eternal life for sinners. That is the greatest event in history.

Today we want to study what is commonly called “Zechariah’s song.” Zechariah was a priest who had served God faithfully all his lifetime. Now, as a senior citizen, he sings a song of praise to God.

Some senior citizens open their mouths only to complain, especially about the younger generation, or to talk about days gone by. But Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth spent time in Bible study and prayer. They lived as shepherds of their people. They never gave up asking God for a son. God heard their prayer and sent the angel Gabriel to tell them that he would give them a son. It was really good news. But, strangely, Zechariah could not believe it. He thought about his gray hair and his wife’s wrinkles and said, “How can I be sure of this?” Zechariah’s unbelief was an offense to God. So the angel rebuked him and gave him dumb training--not to speak until his son was born. After nine months of silence, Zechariah opened his mouth and sang a song of praise to God. To our surprise, his song is not about his son, but about the coming of the Messiah to redeem his people. We learn especially that Jesus is the horn of salvation to save us from our enemy, sin; Jesus is the rising sun to shine his heavenly sunshine on those living in darkness.

Look at verse 68. “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.” Here “he has come” means “he has visited.” God chose the people of Israel to be his own people of all peoples, and he gave them his word of promise. God also gave them a mission to be a priestly nation. His people should have thanked God for all the privileges he gave. Instead, they disobeyed his words. Finally, they abandoned God. So God did not have to visit this rebellious people. But in his great mercy, God visited them “first.” No one wants to apologize first, even if it means disaster. Refusing to apologize reflects efforts to protect a fragile sense of self. Politicians and religious leaders are known for their non-apology apologies, such as “If I hurt anyone, I am truly sorry.” Notice the “If” – the person doesn’t know whether he or she has hurt anyone, but wants to cover his bets and express an all-purpose apology. This vague apology acknowledges no wrong action, no regret (for what?) and no intention to change his/her behavior in any way in the future. Some non-apologies are even worse! There is the “I’m sorry you feel that way” which is a passive-aggressive way of saying, “screw you!” But God visited his people “first.” We call this “God’s absolute divine mercy.” In order to visit his people first, the Almighty God humbled himself, lowering himself to the position of a servant. In order to visit his people, the Almighty God came to this word as a baby in a manger—helpless and poor. Praise Jesus who visited his people in such a humble way. When we think about Jesus who visited us first, we are greatly moved.

Zechariah probably never dreamed that the Messiah would have to die to accomplish redemption. It took Jesus years to get the fact into his disciple’s heads that “the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected . . . and be killed and on the third day be raised.” There had been hints of this in the Old Testament (like Isaiah 53), but none of the Jews in Jesus’ day understood this. What Zechariah had in mind when he said God had visited and redeemed his people was probably the same thing Moses had in mind when he described God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. In Exodus 6:6 Moses quotes God, saying, “I am the Lord, I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.” Zechariah, no doubt, is hoping that the Israel of his day will be delivered from her oppressive Roman empire and that Messiah, the King, will reign over a liberated Israel. It has not been revealed to Zechariah that this national-political deliverance will not happen at the first coming of the Messiah, but only at his second coming. Nevertheless, we will see signs in Zechariah’s song that the redemption of the Messiah is more than national liberation.

Look at verse 69. “He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.” The kind of horn mentioned here is not a musical instrument but the deadly weapon of the wild ox. This is the only place in the New Testament where Jesus is called a horn, so we must go back to the Old Testament, no doubt where Zechariah got the image, to see what it means. Psalm 92:9-10 gives us a picture of what the horn stood for: “For surely your enemies, O Lord, surely your enemies will perish; all evildoers shall be scattered. You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox.” The horn is a sign of strength and a means of victory. In Micah 4:13 God says to Jerusalem, “Rise and thresh, Daughter Zion, for I will make horns of iron…and you will break to pieces many nations.” When a horn sprouts on an ox’s head and becomes like iron, then he must be feared by all his enemies.

King David says in 2 Samuel 22:3, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God is my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation.” God is his defense (his shield) and his offense (his deadly and powerful horn). He is a horn of salvation because he uses his power to secure and protect his people. Jesus is the horn of salvation because he is a deadly weapon and tremendous power which, according to verse 71, God uses to save his people from their enemies and all who hate them. Zechariah means primarily; that the Messiah will one day literally destroy his enemies and gather his people into his land and rule them in peace. And indeed, he will when he comes a second time. But Zechariah’s words necessarily imply more than that. Verses 74-75 show that the goal of God’s redemption in raising up a horn of salvation is to “grant that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” God’s aim in raising a horn of salvation is not merely to liberate an oppressed people, but to create a holy and righteous people who live in no fear because they trust him. This means that the redemption spoken of in verse 68 must include redemption from fear of enemies and from all unrighteousness. If the goal of God’s redemption is to be achieved—the gathering of a people who are fearless and righteous—then he must conquer fear and conquer unrighteousness.

And the good news of Zechariah’s song—the good news of Christmas—is that God has raised up a horn of salvation. Jesus is the great ox-horn of salvation for all those who call upon him and trust him. But many times, we feel powerless. We feel that sometimes God is not powerful enough to save us and our problems. We struggle with emotional wounds we received when we were young. Why? Because of Satan’s horn. In the Bible, there are two kinds of horns: one is the horn of salvation, and the other, the horn of Satan. According to Revelation 17:3, Satan has seven heads and ten horns, while men have one head and no horn. The Bible says that Satan is cleverer than any man. The power of Satan overpowered all human beings in history. Many people think they suffer because of their family members or because of their future security problem. But actually they suffer because of Satan’s harassment. This applies to all mankind. To mankind, the horn of Satan is most fearsome; when it impales a man it leaves him in a critical condition throughout his lifetime. One pastor was holding a church meeting, and after the meeting, one assistant pastor stormed out of the meeting. The pastor was puzzled, wondering what’s going on. Later, he found out that the assistant pastor was suffering from the feeling of being ignored. Since he was young, he was always ignored by his family and his teachers. So in the meeting, when he was not consulted, he felt that he was being ignored, and he was angry. His scar from the childhood wounds was not healed. Many people who have lost their mothers in their young age are emotionally scarred for life. Many psychologists say that their wounds last lifetime. Satan’s horn impaled them through the power of death, and left them wounded. They have hard time trusting in God, and questioning God’s power. The horn of Satan is the worst enemy of mankind. But praise God, for he has raised up a horn of salvation to crush the horn of Satan. Praise God that he rescues us from the horn of Satan.

Today many people think that the solutions to our problems are the drugs. They say that two-thirds of Canadians over 65 have five or more different prescriptions, and one-quarter take 10 or more prescription drugs. The older you get, the more drugs you take. More than 40 per cent of senior seniors (85 and over) take 10 or more drugs. Many drug companies are working diligently to develop pills to cure all kinds of diseases. How wonderful it would be if one pill can cure all kinds of problems? Someone has OCD. Take one pill, and it is gone. Someone is struggling with math. Take one pill like in the movie “Limitless,” and it is solved. Someone is struggling with weight. Take one pill, and it is solved. Someone has marital problems. Take one pill, and it is solved. But they do not know that our fearful enemy the devil is behind all our problems and he cannot be defeated by drugs. 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Every one of us will be devoured by that enemy if there is no horn of salvation for us. But “praise be to the Lord, God of Israel, for he has come and redeemed his people, and raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David…salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.”

These two things make Christmas good news of great joy to all who believe. 1 John 3:8b says, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” Hebrews 9:26 says, “But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Fear and guilt, the two great spoilers of life, have been taken away because Satan has been disarmed and sin has been forgiven. Satan may be a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, but none of those who take refuge in Christ, the horn of our salvation, can he destroy.

Finally, Zechariah says a few words about his son John. John would be a prophet who would prepare the way for the Messiah. Then immediately, Zechariah begins to talk about Jesus again. Look at verse 78. “...because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven....” Our God is the God of “tender mercy.” God knows how vulnerable we are in the tragedy of our sins. He does not intimidate us with his power and majesty. Instead, he comes to us as a little baby in a manger to be our friend and shepherd. He embraces and understands us and forgives our sins through his own sacrifice. In his tender mercy, God sent Jesus to us from heaven, like the rising sun.

Look at verse 79. “...to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” The power of death is like a dark shadow over each person’s life. It is at the root of the selfishness and hedonism that disfigure people and make them miserable. No one could solve the problem of inevitable death. But Jesus has the power to give eternal life to those who believe in him (Jn 5:24). His life-giving power drives out the power of death, like the sun shines into the darkness and completely dispels it. His light enables us to lift up our heads and look up to God and see eternal life in his kingdom. Hope in the heavenly kingdom is real and abiding. It does not disappoint us. It gives us peace in our hearts in any kind of difficult or troublesome situation. Indeed, he guides our feet into the path of peace.

Many people at this Christmas will be living without hope. Next year does not look like a rosy one for them. There is a great deal of uncertainty for them and life just seems dark. Even more people are living without eternal hope. They are living in darkness. They are just plodding along enjoying life and ignorant of what awaits them after death. They are living in the shadow of death – eternal death. Jesus came to shine his light on those living in darkness without hope. Jesus, the rising sun, is shining in Canada today to drive out all the darkness and to make Canada a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

In this passage we learned that Jesus is the horn of salvation. We are again reminded that Satan has been defeated by the horn of salvation Jesus. May God help us to renew our faith that in Jesus we have victory so that all our wounds may be healed and we may be made whole.