


He Has Visited

2025-12-21 – Luke 1:57-80

	<p>In the early first century, the people of Israel were praying for a Messiah to come. They hoped that like the days of old, God would visit His people. What they received when God did visit was far greater than they could have ever imagined. This Sunday, we will look at the Lord who visits His people and how the coming of Jesus should impact the way we live.</p>
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Worship in the lighting of the Advent candle

Good morning everyone. I'm David, and I read the Advent for today. My beautiful wife is sick, so she wasn't able to come, but I'm here.

The people longed for a Messiah—someone to deliver them from the earthly authorities that oppressed them. But God's plan was greater than anything they imagined. The Lord's promised Messiah would reign on the highest throne, above all thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities.

As the prophet Isaiah said:

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. A light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness. You have enlarged the nation and increased its joy. The people have rejoiced before you as they rejoice at harvest time and as they rejoice when dividing spoils. For you have shattered their oppressive yoke and the rod on their shoulders, the staff of their oppressor—just as you did on the day of Midian. For every trampling boot of battle and the bloody garments of war will be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever. The zeal of the Lord of Armies will accomplish this.”

Isaiah 9:2–7 CSB

Worship in the Word

I thought he did a good job. And you all don't know this. You see him—he's got—David and Maya have two kids. And you may say, "Well, his wife's sick and he left the kids at home." No, he brought them. So she's home resting. So double good job.

Well, good morning, everyone. If you've got your Bibles, I want to invite you to open to Luke chapter 1. We're going to be in verses 67 through 79 today, as we look at Zechariah rejoicing at the birth of his son, John the Baptist.

What will you worship this week?

And our goal today is we are going to seek to answer the question, "**What will you worship this week?**" **What will you worship this week?**

As we look today, we are going to see Zechariah filled with the Spirit, rejoicing in the Lord at the birth of his son and at the coming Messiah.

And this week—if you didn't know—this is Christmas week, which means there's a lot—I'm glad most of you are like, "Yep, I got that," okay. Christmas week, which means there's a lot going on. And there are a lot of pressures in the world this week. A lot of things that we face that can pull our attention away from Christ.

First and foremost, there's consumerism, materialism, nostalgia. There are all of these things that fight and vie for our attention.

I was chuckling, but no one spoiled the Bears game for me. I stopped at overtime to get to bed. I'm joking. I'm joking. That joke has landed that well every time, but it's worth it.

But I was looking this morning, and I saw, "Oh, there's NFL games on Thursday on Christmas Day," and I was like, "Oh, there's NFL games. Well, I need to see how those fit in with the NBA." And all of a sudden, I was like planning out my Christmas Day around sports games. And that's not the point of this holiday. Maybe I got a thumbs up from one person.

But here's the reality. If we're not careful, we can get to the end of Thursday never having rejoiced in our Lord and Savior.

And it's not just because of the external pressures. It's because of the internal as well. We are sinners saved by grace, and we still walk in our worldly ways when we don't put them off.

There's a reality that the pressures we feel to make Christmas Day great—or maybe you work on Christmas Day, and as I'm talking in your head, you're rolling your eyes like, "Oh, here's the sermon for all the people who have Christmas off, but I'm stuck at work."

Well, whether you're working, whether you're home, whether you're hosting, whether you're traveling, whether people are coming in, if you're dealing with disappointment because people were going to come, but now they can't—whatever the case may be, there is one who we should be giving all worship and honor and glory to on Christmas.

And not just on Christmas, because some of you are like, "Well, we should do it every day." Of course we should. Christ is worthy of worship every day.

But there is a day coming up when you probably get the day off. And my hope and prayer is that by the end of this sermon, you're going to be thinking, "How do I make sure I'm intentional that day?" And my hope is that it's not just a pattern for one day, but a pattern for every day.

Because there's a reality that we should be putting our hope and our focus and our worship on Christ. And when we are not careful, he can be far from the center. And the reality is that in our tendencies, we don't place him where he should be. But he is seated on the throne above every throne. And that is where we should place him in our hearts, souls, and minds. And that's how we should walk in all of our strength.

And so to that end, I'm going to pray, and then we will jump into our passage.

Father in heaven, we thank you that you sent your son. We thank you that he has visited. He has come to the earth. He lived a perfect life. He died on the cross for our sins. He rose from the grave. He ascended to heaven where he reigns. And we thank you that he is coming again, not for a quick visit, but he will return forever and all who believe in his name will spend eternity with him.

We thank you that through the work of your Spirit, we can have assurance of salvation.

And Father, I pray right now your Spirit is moving in our midst, that you would give us all eyes to see and ears to hear what your Word has to say. And Lord, I pray you would speak to me and speak through me that these would be your words and not mine. I pray that we would all seek to set Christ at the center, not just this week, but every day, even now. We pray all of this in his holy and precious name. Amen.

So our goal—we're going to try and answer the question, "**What will you worship this week?**" And again, Sunday school answer: Jesus. And then reality: how are we going to do it is what we're looking at.

He Has Visited – Center your worship on the coming King!

In the words of Zechariah at the birth of his son, we are going to see that how we should focus our worship is we should remember that **he has visited** and we should **center our worship on the coming king**.

We're going to see that in the prayer of Zechariah at the birth and the circumcision and the naming of his son, as we will see in Luke chapter 1.

He Has Visited – Center your worship on the coming King!

The Lord remembers His promises to redeem His people (68-71)

The first point we're going to see is that the Lord remembers his promises to redeem his people. The Lord remembers his promises to redeem his people.

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel,
because **he has visited** and provided redemption for his people.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,
just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets in ancient times;
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of those who hate us.

Luke 1:67-71 CSB

Luke 1:67 begins: ***Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.*** Now before I go into this—we're skipping some things if you've been following along and I'm just going to briefly cover—so at the start of Luke 1 about 57 we've got Elizabeth—it's the time for her to give birth. And if you remember God sent Gabriel to Zechariah in Luke chapter 1 about verse 20 and Zechariah is in the temple and he's worshiping, he's a priest, and he's burning incense. It's a thing that a priest gets to do once in their lifetime.

He's doing that, and Gabriel shows up as Zechariah's in front of the curtain, the 60-foot high, 30-foot wide curtain that separates God and man. The Holy of Holies is in front of him with the curtain between, and the angel Gabriel shows up and tells him, "Zechariah, you are going to have a son. Your wife Elizabeth is going to have a son. You will name him John. He is a prophet of the Most High. He's going to go out before the coming king."

And Zechariah's response is not, "Praise the Lord." His response is, "How will that happen? For I am old and my wife is well along in years." His language is, "She's post-menopausal and I'm pretty old. How is that going to happen?" And Gabriel's response is, "Because you didn't believe. You're going to be silent until all of these things take place." And so for the last nine or 10 months leading up to this moment, Zechariah has not said anything.

Some of you women may think, "I wish my husband would not say anything." Good, good.

But imagine—he's in the temple, he comes out, he's been in there a while. The people are wondering, he comes out, he can't say anything. And then the people find out his wife is pregnant and they're wondering and they're waiting. And remember, the people of this day, the waiting

isn't just they're waiting about this child. They've been waiting for 400 years in silence. And now they're wondering, "Is the silence over?" And the answer is silence from Zechariah.

And they're waiting. And they're wondering. And they're waiting on the Messiah. They're waiting on one who will come like Elijah. They're waiting on something that will change their reality. They're hoping for someone who will overthrow Rome, hoping for someone who will bring them back to the position they should be in as God's people.

And now Elizabeth has this son. And the people worship. And they say God has shown great mercy on her.

Eight days later, on the baby's eighth day, they haven't named it yet. They didn't name the baby—the male sons—until they were circumcised. And so they circumcised the baby, and then they're trying to come up with a name. And it's funny, the people have an idea of the name. And I always read this, and it's because Zechariah can't speak. Culturally in that day, you might expect the dad to name. But so the people are like, "We should name him Zechariah."

And that's a solid name to give this baby, because they don't know what Gabriel said. But they've got this idea. "We should name this baby Zechariah." The name Zechariah means *Yahweh remembers, or the Lord remembers*. And look how he has remembered Zechariah and Elizabeth. Let's name the son after that and after the father. It's an honoring thing.

And here's Elizabeth's response. "No, no, no. His name will be John." And they all look around and they say, "You don't have anyone in your family tree named John. That's not how we do things." I think it's funny, you listen to this today and you're like, "What? People don't get to tell you how to name your kids." But in that day, it was odd that she would do this.

And so they're looking at Zechariah like, "What do you think?" And Zechariah—he can't speak—and he asks for a tablet, and he writes on the tablet, "His name is John." And immediately, his mouth loosens. And immediately he begins to speak and he begins to praise God.

And we're going to read these words.

Now, in this moment, when people saw this, they would have been rejoicing and they would have been wondering what will come of this child. Who will he be? The people would have been abuzz. This priest had a child. He was unable to speak. Now he's able to speak. They're naming the child John. And there's this excitement building in the people.

And here are the words of Zechariah. This is the worship he has at the birth of his son, the first time he has spoken since God said, "You will not speak until your son is born and he is named John."

Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because **he has visited** and provided redemption for his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets in ancient times, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of those who hate us.

Now the first thing here that we need to understand is the phrase "**he has visited**." Because when we read this phrase in the New Testament, it is building on some very important passages from the old.

First—and foremost, Genesis 21:1.

Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel,
because **he has visited** and provided redemption for his people.

Genesis 21:1 - The Lord **came** to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised.

Exodus 3:16 - "Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said: **I have paid close attention** to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt.

Exodus 4:31 - The people believed, and when they heard that the Lord **had paid attention** to them and that he had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped.

Jeremiah 29:10-11 - For this is what the Lord says: "When seventy years for Babylon are complete, **I will attend to you** and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place. For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

We talked over the summer about Abraham and Sarah. God promised that Sarah would have a child, and then they try through Hagar, and they don't really believe God's going to bring about a child through Sarah because she is so advanced in years. And Abraham is old. And what happens out of it is: ***The Lord came to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised.*** (Genesis 21:1)

And the language of "**came**" there—it's the Hebrew word that then gets translated in Greek to "he has visited." It's the idea of God caring for his people and carrying out his promises.

And so that's the first example. And that's a very appropriate example because Sarah and Abraham are advanced in years. Zechariah and Elizabeth are advanced in years.

The next key example of this word, Exodus 3:16: "***Go and assemble the elders of Israel...*** This is God talking to Moses in the burning bush. And God is telling Moses you are going to go back to Egypt ***and say to them, the Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said, I have paid close attention to you, to what has been done to you in Egypt.***" And it's the idea of "I visited you and I've seen your affliction."

In Exodus 4:31, when Moses goes and delivers that message, ***the people believe, and when they heard that the Lord had paid attention to them, and that He had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped.*** The imagery here is the imagery of God Most High on His throne, looking down and going among His people. The imagery is God who is above everything before everything, seeing and carrying out His promises for His people.

Jeremiah 29:10-11—everyone knows that, "***for I know the plans that I have for you.***" The verse immediately before it: ***For this is what the Lord says, when 70 years for Babylon are completed...*** When you have been in exile for 70 years ***I will attend to you.*** I will visit you ***and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.***

God's plans for his people—he visits them, he cares for them, he attends to them. The imagery of "he has visited" is the imagery of a God who carries out his promises for his people. This theme is not just in these places in scripture. Give me a few hours—at Ruth when Naomi finds out there's a famine in Israel, but she finds out God has visited his people. There's food again. You see this again and again in the Old Testament.

And this imagery of "he has visited"—again—it's that most high God seated on the throne above everything coming down to his people.

We don't have a lot of easy illustrations for this. But do you guys know who Jeff Bezos is? Yeah, some of you. He's the guy—he's like the CEO of Amazon. He rented out Venice for a wedding. Like he's kind of a big deal. He's making a Lord of the Rings show that's terrible and just pouring money into it because he wants to say he made a Lord of the Rings show. I don't know.

This man has all the money in the world. A week ago, I bought a prime rib on sale from his Amazon Fresh store over here. And when I cut it open, when I cut the packaging open, it reeked. It was rancid. And so I logged into the Amazon app and I complained and said I want a refund. And immediately we got an apology and a refund.

Imagine if Jeff Bezos heard about that and got in—he's probably got like a hover car or something—and he flew over and had a handwritten note and said, "Matt, I am so sorry. Here's a gift card for the amount, and I want to personally ask, do you need any dishes cleaned? Do you want me to take the trash?"

Imagine that kind of care. Like he's got too much to do. If you got a handwritten card from him, you would assume someone else wrote it, right? Like he's got enough going on in his life and he's got enough power and wealth that he's going to hold himself higher than all of that.

And I make this joke in comparison because someone with that much power coming down—okay, that would be, you know, like I'm a customer. The customer's always right. He's got to make it right. I might be able to see that in a very perverse way—not really.

But God in heaven, seated on that throne on high, owes us nothing. It's not us coming to Him saying, "God, you owe me a refund. This world..." No, we are sinners, separated from God from birth. We are dead in our sin. The only way we can be alive is through His grace and His mercy. And He has come down and visited us—not because we are worthy of it, but because he has promised that he would do it. He visits us to carry his word out, not because we are worthy of it, but because he has said he would do it.

From in the garden with the woman when he said, "I'm going to send someone from her line who will crush your head" to the serpent. To David, the promise that one will come from the line of David, who will also be from the line of God.

You look at every promise in the Old Testament. God makes those promises and God commits to keeping and carrying them out. He has visited us. He has carried through his promises.

Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel,
because **he has visited** and provided redemption for his people.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,
just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets in ancient times;
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of those who hate us.

Luke 1:68-71 CSB

And I got to point out a little bit more in this passage. The next things that said, "***he has raised a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.***"

Before this week, I've never done a deep dive on this passage, but always in the back of my head, I was like, "Oh, he's talking about Israel because John's going to come into Israel and going to do good things." But the language of "***he has raised a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David***" is language that could only apply to the Messiah.

So the first words out of this man's mouth, at seeing the fulfillment of the birth and naming of his son John, seeing God do the impossible, is he immediately is praising that the Messiah is coming. He is centered on Christ in this moment. And he's centered before Christ has come.

He's centered based on—he probably saw Mary when she visited Elizabeth, and maybe—I don't know—maybe he figured a little bit out there. We're kind of told he couldn't really hear or speak, and so we're not sure, but we know that from what Gabriel said, that "your son will come, he will prepare the way, and the Messiah will come." And so immediately his focus is on the greater deliverance that God is going to do.

Just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets in ancient times, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of those who hate us.

First and foremost is salvation from present realities that he talks about. And then as he keeps going, he talks also about our sin and salvation before the Lord.

He Has Visited – Center your worship on the coming King!

The Lord remembers His promises to redeem His people (68-71)

The Lord remembers his promises to redeem his people. **He has visited us.** He has shown his faithfulness to us. We have a greater picture than what Zechariah had when he wrote these words because we know what Christ has done.

But the Lord remembers his promises to redeem his people. Every word that is in scripture, every word that the Lord has said will not come back void. He will carry them out to the end.

If you believe you will have eternal life now and forever, you will not taste the second death. You will spend eternity with God in heaven because he remembers his promises and he has visited us.

He Has Visited – Center your worship on the coming King!

The Lord remembers His promises to redeem His people (68-71)

The Lord rescues his people to worship him without fear (72-75)

This brings us to the second point. The Lord rescues his people to worship him without fear.

Why has he redeemed us? Well, as we keep reading:

He has dealt mercifully with our ancestors
and **remembered his holy covenant**—
the oath that he swore to our father Abraham,
He has given us the privilege,
Since we have been rescued from the hand of our enemies,
to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness
in his presence all our days.

Luke 1:72-75 CSB

He has dealt mercifully with our ancestors and remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham. So he made a covenant with Abraham.

I don't know if you remember from this summer, but when God made the covenant with Abraham—first with Abram in Genesis 15, and then the further covenants he makes, Genesis 12, Genesis 15, Genesis 22. When you read through those, what you don't find is God says, "Abraham, if you this, then I will this. Abraham, you sign your name, I'll sign my name." Remember, he passes through. He's the one who signs the covenants.

When he first makes the covenant with Abraham, he says, "if you go"—Genesis 12—"you leave your father's house and go to the land that I will show you, I will bless you. I will make your name great. I will bless those who bless you. I will curse those who curse you. I will—and all the nations of the world will be blessed through you. You, 75-year-old man, at some point you will have a son, and your descendants will be like the stars in the heavens and the sand of the seashores."

All of those promises made to Abraham were not contingent upon Abraham but were entirely made by God of what God was going to do.

So when it says "***he has dealt mercifully with our ancestors,***" it is a work of God doing these things.

And he has given us the privilege, since we have been rescued from the hand of our enemies, to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness in his presence all of our days.

Now the language of "to serve"—in Greek, it's the word for worship. And this is a complicated word to bring to English, because when you hear that word, some of you may think, "Oh, it just means singing." And some of you may not like singing. Some of you—if you're like me—may like standing up front here because you can belt it out and no one can hear how bad you sound because singing is not your forte. And when your family sings around the table, your family genetically is not good at singing. We butcher the doxology often as a family.

But I joke here, but when we talk about serving and worshiping, the imagery of worship here is the imagery of serving the Lord and loving the Lord with your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

In the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve were created, in the garden that was full of goodness, when they were doing the work that God had purposed for them before the fall, every act was an act of worship because they were doing what God had commanded them to do and doing it in right relationship with Him and right relationship with one another.

The imagery of "to serve Him without fear and holiness and righteousness"—the imagery of doing this all our days for all eternity.

Sometimes I talk to people who think, "Oh, heaven—it's going to be kind of boring. We just sing and sit in clouds." No, it's a new earth. You think about Eden—you think about they were gardening, they were naming animals. The animals are named. Maybe we'll get to write new languages. I don't know. I don't know what we will do, but I know that God created us to rule on his behalf over creation. And when we are in heaven, it talks about us seated at the right hand of Christ, reigning with him. We will spend eternity serving God, and it will be an act of wonderful worship.

I cannot fathom it, and I'm sure you cannot fathom it either, but what a blessing that we will do that, and we will do it without fear. Because from the moment of the fall, they hid behind bushes. They were separated from God. There was a curtain up that separated God and his people. And yet, through the blood of Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit, we who were dead are made alive to serve him without fear and holiness and righteousness.

He Has Visited – Center your worship on the coming King!

The Lord remembers His promises to redeem His people (68-71)

The Lord rescues his people to worship him without fear (72-75)

The Lord rescues his people to worship him without fear. Christian, that means that your standard before God—he didn't save you to just let you wander around the wilderness. He didn't say, "I just don't want you to go to hell." No, he wants you to worship him and to have right relationship with him.

Read Exodus carefully, and God's plan is not, "I'm going to get you in the wilderness and then see what you do." No—in Exodus 3, when he says, "I have visited my people," he says, "I'm going to move them out of Egypt with a mighty right arm, and I'm going to take them into the promised land."

Now, through the people's actions, that trip goes from one year to 40 years and a pretty funny MapQuest image. But the reality is that God's purpose for His people is to bring them into His presence. And He has redeemed us and He rescues us so that we can worship Him without fear.

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The Lord remembers His promises to redeem His people (68-71)

The Lord rescues his people to worship him without fear (72-75)

The greatest in this life make His mercy known (76-77)

This brings us to the third point. The greatest in this life make His mercy known.

So now—we've got verses 68 through 75 are focused on the greatness of God who has visited his people.

And now for the first time, Zechariah speaks to his son.

And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins.

Luke 1:76-77 CSB

And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.

And this imagery—being called a prophet of the Most High. We looked a couple weeks ago at the reality—God, God Most High, the Son of God is the Son of God Most High. He's fully God and fully man. John's goal in life and his purpose in ministry is going to be to prepare and point people to Jesus. And John does this with such excellence.

You read Luke chapter 3 and the people are coming to John and they think he's a big deal and he says "someone better than me is coming." He points them to the coming Messiah.

In John chapter 1, when he baptizes Jesus, he tells his disciples, "***there is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.***" And some of them leave John. And John isn't sitting there saying, "hold on, guys, come back." No, he's rejoicing that they have gone.

In John chapter 3, one of my favorite places in scripture to just camp out and spend time. The disciples of John are looking around and they notice less and less people are coming to get baptized by John and his disciples because they're going to Jesus and his disciples.

And his disciples say, "hey, that guy you baptized, they're all going to him now." And like they're probably thinking about job security and longevity—I don't know—but they're—it'd be kind of weird if all of a sudden, like, everyone's going next door or something.

And so he's—they're asking like, "what's our—what's going on here?" And here's his response. He says, "hey, I'm not the groom at the wedding. At best, I'm the best man pointing people to the groom and to the bride. This is my job is to make him great. He must increase. I must decrease."

And that imagery is how we should follow Christ.

And I have to say like father like son because when you read Zechariah's praise it's first and foremost pointed at Christ and when he talks about John he's talking about how John is going to point people to Christ. The reality is that we should do the same thing.

He Has Visited – Center your worship on the coming King!

The Lord remembers His promises to redeem His people (68-71)

The Lord rescues his people to worship him without fear (72-75)

The greatest in this life make His mercy known (76-77)

The greatest in this life make his—Christ's—mercy known.

We had a baptism—two baptisms for service. And we've had a lot of baptisms this year, and I feel so blessed every time we have one because someone is coming up here to declare God's mercy and grace. We never have anyone that comes up and says, "hey, I can walk on this water, but I'm going to let you dip me in it." Right? Like no one's perfect that comes up to get baptized. We have people that are great public speakers, people who are terrified. We have people who write every word out they say and people who freeze up and they can't remember.

We have people in all walks of life that come to get baptized.

And what are each of them doing? None of them are pointing to their own glory. None of them are saying, "this is what I bring to the kingdom of God." They are saying, "Christ has brought me into his kingdom."

It is such an amazing thing. When we see it, we are rejoicing that people are exalting in the goodness of God. And that's what we're called to do in our lives. If you've already been baptized, you may say, "well, what else do I do?" Well, you tell people about the goodness of God.

Something that's been a blessing this year is I have met a whole bunch of coworkers from different people here at the church who have said, "Hey, I invited my coworker to church" and I come in and I get to meet people on a Sunday morning who are saying, "Yeah, so-and-so told me to come in."

And they're coming in and they're hearing the gospel because someone in their life said, "Hey, you gotta hear about Jesus. You gotta come hear the message of the gospel." We are called to do this. We are called to do this in big ways and in little ways.

With my kids, we've been going out and we've been buying Christmas presents. And every time we go out, the thing that I make sure we do is, "what's the point of Christmas? It's Jesus's birthday. Why are we celebrating? We're celebrating that Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, came."

And I make sure we talk about that. I say, "being generous and giving gifts is good because God has done that for us." But I try and make sure we're centered on the gospel as much as you can be with a four-year-old and six-year-old.

And I try and make sure that they know that, because it is so important that we are pointing our kids and our families and all of those around us to the mercy that they could have, the forgiveness of sins offered to each and every person who cries out to the Lord.

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The greatest in this life make His mercy known (76-77)
The Creator entered creation to redeem his people (78-79)

And this brings us to the last point. The Creator entered creation to redeem his people.

And if you were here a few weeks ago, you may say, "Pastor Matt, you've made this point." Yes, because in Luke chapter 1 and 2, this point gets made 100 times. Over and over, we are talking about the incarnation of Christ.

Because of our God's merciful compassion,
the dawn from on high **will visit us**
to shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1:78-79 CSB

And what Zechariah's prayer adds to our picture:

Because of God's merciful compassion, the dawn from on high will visit us, to shine on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. The language here—***the dawn from on high***, the language of ***shining to those living in darkness***—we heard David reading today from Isaiah 9, "***in the darkness the people have seen a great light.***"

This is that imagery—God, Emmanuel will be with us. The language of "***the dawn from on high will visit us***"—God in the Old Testament his visits were the presence of God from above coming down to the people but it was still God Creator coming down. And now "***the dawn from on high will visit us***"—this is language of the Creator entering creation.

The visiting has changed—it's the same God—God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—they have no beginning have no end. God is three persons. Before the foundation of the world, Jesus Christ was present with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Before the foundations of the world, if you are a believer, you were chosen by God as his child.

That is true.

But there is a moment where he said, "Let there be light," and there is a moment where he entered creation. He stepped into creation, and he stepped in as a baby, nine months in a womb.

When we talk about God visiting us, that reality takes on new meaning when you realize He walked in our midst. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And He did this because there was no other way for us to be able to walk in the light, for us to be able to leave behind the shadow and darkness, and to walk in the way of peace with Him.

He Has Visited – Center your worship on the coming King!

The Lord remembers His promises to redeem His people (68-71)

The Lord rescues his people to worship him without fear (72-75)

The greatest in this life make His mercy known (76-77)

The Creator entered creation to redeem his people (78-79)

The Creator entered creation. We should marvel at this. It was the only way we could be redeemed, and He willingly paid it. And we know He knew the cost before creation.

And so when we talk about this—again—He remembers His promises to redeem His people. He knew when He said, "let there be light" the cost, and He paid it. And to a people who rejected Him, who sinned, who walked in death and wrath, the Lord rescues His people that we can worship Him without fear.

I and my righteousness, you and your righteousness—we could not stand before him in our works. And yet God has saved us, that we could worship him through the blood of Christ, clothed in his righteousness. And again, he doesn't just do this that we would be able to say, "all right, I get to go to heaven someday," but he does it so we can do the good works prepared for us, as it says in Ephesians 2.

And the greatest thing we can do in this life is we can make his mercy known. We can point others to him. We can remind ourselves of the truth of the gospel, that the Creator entered creation to redeem his people.

The Son of God came and died on the cross for our sins. He rose and he reigns and he is returning.

So what do we do with this this week?

He has visited. How do we center our worship on the coming King? I hope you've got ideas already, but I want to be very practical with you.

I know that whenever I'm out of my normal routine, I struggle deeply to stay focused in my devotions. When my family travels, I like to sleep in because grandma and grandpa watch the kids while I lay in bed a super long time until like the third time my mom says, "are you up in there?"

But I also—I know that I could wake up and instead of scrolling my phone or whatever, I could spend time in the word. I could spend time in prayer. I could rejoice that I have this peace that sometimes I don't get at home because of the chaos.

I know Christmas morning—the battle—I don't know what the battle is like in your home, but the kids see those presents under the tree and their eyes go a little wild. Something that we do as a family on Christmas Eve—we spend time in the word. We don't do presents or we do like pajama presents.

And then Christmas morning, before we do any present opening, we read through—we've got like a children's story of Jesus's birth that we walk the kids through and we spend time in prayer and we make sure that the day is centered around Christ.

And you may say, "Well, Matt, I don't have children or my children aren't visiting or I'm traveling or whatever." Well, today's the day to think—you know what you're doing on Christmas day, probably. Are you going to make that day focused on giving glory to God, exalting his name?

One of the men at our church—at my Ironman table—he shared before Thanksgiving, he was told, "Hey, at Thanksgiving, we want you to pray over the turkey." And he was asking the Ironman table, "Hey, there's going to be a lot of non-believers there. Will you pray that I'm bold in how I share the gospel? And wise." Because if the turkey's getting cold and he's like giving a sermon, people aren't gonna remember that fondly, but praying for wisdom and for the spirit to move, right? Like we can plan ahead—not just which football or basketball game we're gonna watch, but how we are going to give glory to the Lord, how we are going to focus.

Dads, I know that every holiday, there's something at the end of the day that I'm like, "I wish we would've done that." And I pretend like it's not my choice not to do it because I'm like, "well, the day just got away from me." But start the weekend, start the day—start thinking about how you are going to give glory to God. That is what we can do. And he is worthy of that.

Following the example of Zechariah, following the example of John the Baptist—give glory to him. And not just Christmas Day or Christmas Eve—do it then. But this is an everyday thing that we should be doing because the Creator entered creation to give us salvation.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, Father, we thank you that while we were still sinners, you sent your Son. We thank you that though the wages of our sin or death, though what we could do in our lives could never lead to our redemption, you had a plan and purpose, and you brought it about. You have visited us with redemption.

We thank you, Lord, that as we talk about your Son, he has visited us, and we also know that he will come again to dwell with us forever, and that our hope is in that, and our hope is in you, Lord.

We thank you, Lord, that for all who believe that as we come together today, as we come together each and every day, We believe because you have opened our eyes to the truth and your name is exalted.

And we pray that we would point others to that truth and that reality, that we would see many more come to know you.

We praise you, Lord, that we can say all of this in confidence, not because of anything we've done, but because of everything that you have done through the work of your Son.

We pray all of this in his holy and precious name. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Amen.

Benediction

Philippians chapter 2, for our benediction:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself and made Himself nothing, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

Our Lord came as a baby. He grew and lived a perfect life, fully God, fully man—tested and yet impeccable in heart, without sin, perfect. And as the perfect God-man, he laid down his life for us on the cross, the righteous for the unrighteous, that we could be brought near. He was crucified outside of the city, just like the sacrificial animals were burned outside of the city. He was crucified outside so that we could be brought inside.

He came to us, our God came to us, our God rescues us, and we have great hope for all eternity. He came once, and we—like Pastor Matt said—know more than Zechariah. And we know He's coming again, and we look forward to His coming.

Have you been reconciled to God? Have you put your faith and trust in him? Have you asked him for the forgiveness of your sins, for the cleansing by his blood? Each and every one of us must do this.

Let's pray.

Lord, we come to you in faith, and we trust by your Holy Spirit that you are working in our midst.

If there's even one woman or man in this room who has never put their faith in you, work by the power of your Holy Spirit. Raise them to new life in Christ. Show them that when you died, Lord Jesus, you died for them—the righteous for the unrighteous, the blood shed on the cross for the atonement, forgiveness of our sins.

We thank you, Lord, that we can be forgiven, that we can be cleansed. We put our faith in you. And Lord, from our hearts, we confess Jesus is Lord.

Say it with me: “Jesus is Lord.”

And we believe, Lord, that you were raised from the dead.

And Lord, we look forward to when you come again.

Please come quickly, in Jesus' name. Amen.



Digging Deeper – **He Has Visited** – Luke 1:57-80

1. What stood out to you from the sermon?

Read Luke 1:57-80