

The Dayspring From on High Hath Visited Us!

Luke 1:68-79, Advent Evening I

December 2, 2009

Beloved of the Lord....Zacharias and Elisabeth were both well stricken in years when God through an angel promised them a son who would be named John. Remember because of his doubt, Zacharias was not permitted to speak for nine months and eight days. Even when Elisabeth gave birth, God did not loose the tongue of Zacharias, and it wasn't until the formal naming of the child eight days later God permitted Zacharis to speak. While we might expect his first words to be of the great joy he had in the gift of a son, we notice his first words were not of John but of Christ. Out of twelve verses of pure joy, only two verses refer to John, but the joy of Christ is in every one! His mind, his heart, and his faith could only think of that little Child that would be born in Bethlehem! "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people!.....The day spring from on high hath visited us!" He's practically jumping and shouting for joy! What lesson then can we learn from Zacharias? The highest joy on earth can only come from heaven above. For "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given...His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people." Clearly Zacharias had great joy didn't He! Every verse, every line and phrase testifies to his strong heartfelt love for Jesus. But when we compare his joy with our own, why do we fall short? Why doesn't our love for God burn hot instead of wax cold? While the answer to earth's sorrows is always sin in one form or another, often our lukewarm love for God stems from our superficial knowledge of sin. Are our sins big or little? What does your conscience tell you? What was it that you did with your hand the other day? What was it that you did with your

eye? Did your mouth speak words of anger or love? Did you love your neighbor as God loves you? These questions one way or another ought to convict us all. Are we by nature dead in trespasses and sins or not? I Corinthians 5:14, "if one died for all, then were all dead." Is Christ a big or little Savior?

It is an incredible contradiction beyond all understanding, when we who know Christ by faith, sin. When we think of the price He paid, the blood which He shed, would we by sin place another burden on His back? Would we crucify Christ anew? While there is nothing but sadness when we ponder the nails, the blood, the excruciating pain He endured, the Gospel is to be found in His heart of Jesus, in the WHY He suffered! His heart was in it for you. His heart of love through the cross would turn God's heart from wrath to love for you. In faith we must connect the dots. Why did He come and visit His people? Why was He born in Bethlehem? Why did He live, die, and rise again? Faith answers, faith responds, FOR ME, FOR ME, FOR ME. Here is His great and infinite love for you dear fellow redeemed of the Lord. He came, He visited this earth, FOR YOU and FOR ME. Thus when we speak of joy, when we speak of measure, can His infinite love be measured? Can the infinite be measured by the finite? Try if you may to measure His mercy for you in Psalm 103. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Doesn't His immeasurable love for you cause you to love Him without measure?

This is why Jesus is called the horn of our salvation. That term "horn" signifies a strong and firm, unwavering help. Not only is our salvation strong, complete, and sure, but God through Christ is our eternal and unwavering Father who will guard and defend His children from all enemies with all His heart, strength and might! "That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us!" Not only can we face the devil with defiance "for it is God that justifieth", but also we need

not fear our spiritual enemies knowing Christ through the cross has conquered them all. They cannot lay a finger upon us without God's permission, and even when God grants it, it only works toward our own salvation. Even if it be God's will that we suffer a martyr's death, "I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home." Jesus said, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."

This promise of salvation has always been God's promise of old. "He spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." From the earliest moments of time, since the Fall of Adam and Eve, God has always sent His prophets who speak the promise of the Gospel. Who was the first Prophet God sent Adam and Eve? It was Christ who sought these fallen sinners out in the Garden of Eden. Down through the ages Christ as our Prophet continually spoke to fallen sinners the promise of the Gospel, through various holy prophets, who were holy by faith in Christ alone. A prophet in his own right, Abraham not only heard and believed God's holy Gospel oath, but he passed along the Gospel promise to his children. Zacharias was such a child. We too as children most likely heard God's Gospel promise through the prophet who taught us the Gospel, our pastors. Until the Last Day God in His mercy will continue to do so, for His desire for the salvation of all men is sincere.

In our text it is clear Zacharias found great joy in the knowledge John would be a Gospel preacher. "Thou child shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins." The face of the Lord is important in that through Christ there is smile toward sinners on God's face and not a frown. While we will never have the pleasure of seeing Jesus on earth as John the Baptist, Simeon and Anna, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, when He returns He will indeed be smiling at us, for we through faith are His chosen and redeemed children. He too in the Gospel has given us the "knowledge of salvation" by the remission of

our sins.

"Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." In what greater way could God reveal His tender mercies toward sinners than with the quiet birth of the Christ-child? Look at how mercifully He comes in such a non-threatening way! No one is every afraid of a baby, and here is Almighty God-incarnate, the Judge of the quick and the dead, lying there in a manger the heavens adoring, wrapped in swaddling clothes! How quietly, how quietly the Gift of God is given! The Dayspring from on High hath visited us! Dayspring means morning star, the first rays of light. Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness who carries healing in His wings. Indeed His birth was like the rising of the sun, the dawn of a new day, the age-old promise of redemption fulfilled! When such Light comes after a night of darkness, the heart itself is filled with hope! Better days are to come!

For "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Beloved of the Lord, by God's grace we do indeed have the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins through Christ Jesus. While to our shame our love for Him is not a constant burning love, but more like a flickering flame, thanks be to God His love for us never wavers and His mercy is higher than the heavens above the earth. Let us therefore eagerly look forward to His Second coming, much as Zacharis looked forward to His first. Until then let us serve Him without fear, but with holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." Even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He will guide our feet into the way of peace. Amen.