



Luke 1:67–79 (NRSV)

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. ⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. ⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. ⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. ⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Background

- Luke’s gospel was written around year 85 CE
- Luke was a physician and travel companion of the Apostle Paul
- Zechariah is a priest; _____ is Zechariah’s wife
- Zechariah and Elizabeth were childless into old age
- Angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and told him Elizabeth would have a son whose name will be _____
- Zechariah did not believe the angel and was therefore muted/silenced (Luke 1:20)
- Zechariah did not speak again until the baby was born and named John

Benedictus/Song of Zechariah

- Benedictus is Latin for _____
- Name taken from first words of the song: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel
- Horn of salvation = Messiah
- Zechariah highlights Christ, just as his son John will do
- Zechariah praises God for John’s role in “preparing the way” for the Lord

Historical Setting

- Jewish people were conquered and living under Roman occupation
- Had previously been occupied by Babylonians, Persians and Greeks
- Revolting or rebelling could lead to death
- Rome ruled with a strong arm
- God was “silent” for over 400 years: no prophets
- The world was a dark place, looking for hope

Old Testament Links

A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together...” —Isaiah 40:3–5 (NRSV)

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

—Malachi 3:1 (NRSV)

Two Agents

- John the Baptist, the prophet, was to prepare the way
- Jesus is to BE the way of salvation

Why Did God Need Someone To Prepare the Way?

1. To fulfill the _____
2. To create _____
3. Because of God’s desire to be in _____

- Our baptism in Christ levels all playing fields and makes all paths even
- Our baptism reminds us of the forgiveness and salvation found in Christ
- Our baptism calls us all to “prepare the way for the Lord” and live in ways that create paths that lead people to Christ.

What kind of path are you creating? Would others find Christ if they followed?