

1:57 Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son.

1:58 When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

1:59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias.

1:60 His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John."

1:61 But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name."

1:62 So they made signs to his father-what he would have him called.

1:63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled.

1:64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.

1:65 Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea.

1:66 And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

1:67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

1:68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,

1:69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David,

1:70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began,

1:71 That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us,

1:72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant,

1:73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:

1:74 To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,

1:75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

1:76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,

1:77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins,

1:78 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

1:79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

[From today's sermon.

Last week we heard the words, "Blessed man, congratulations, the Lord is with you," and the encouragement, "Do not be afraid, you have received grace from God.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you." There is nothing that God cannot do." Even though God's will is beyond our ability to conceive, "How can this be? I have tasted the blessing of those who respond, "I am the Lord's handmaiden; let it be done to me according to your word.

How blessed is the woman who believes that what the Lord has spoken will be fulfilled!

Yes. What a blessing it is to have God with us in our lives, to have the Mighty One doing great things for us, great things beyond human understanding. The Lord does not forget to be merciful and to help His servant. The light of the morning dawn rises through God's deep and profound mercy, His care and redemption that rescues us from the hands of our enemies, the hands of those who hate us, the shadows of darkness and death, sin and death.

God fills our lives with heavenly light from the depths of His deep, deep heart, full of compassionate love. We can serve Him well, righteously, and without fear.

Good morning everyone.

Last week we heard the words, "Blessed man, congratulations, the Lord is with you," and we received the encouragement, "Do not be afraid, you have received grace from God.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you." There is nothing that God cannot do." Even though God's will is beyond our ability to conceive, "How can this be? I have tasted the blessing of those who respond, "I am the Lord's handmaiden; let it be done to me according to your word.

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Zacharias also saw the whole thing.

He was shown in a vivid way that the unthinkable does indeed happen.

The Christmas story is about things that we cannot imagine happening, things that we say, "How can that be? I am an old man and my wife is old. It also means that a merciful event will happen, that "the Mighty One has done great things for me.

Zacharias also worshipped the Lord's work of deep mercy with his wife Elisabeth.

Together they praised the name of the Lord.

How blessed is the woman who believes that what the Lord has spoken will be fulfilled!

Even if it seems unbelievable, if the Lord speaks it, it will come true. What is important for us

is to believe and wait.

Zacharias and Elisabeth waited for the birth of their child.

And the day of the birth came.

1:57 Now when the moon was full, Elisabeth gave birth to a son.

58 And the neighbors and relatives rejoiced together when they heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her.

The word "mercy" appears frequently in today's passage. It also appeared frequently in last week's passage.

1:49 For the Mighty One has done great things for me. 1:49 For he has done great things for me; his name is good,

1:50 His mercy extends to all who fear him, from generation to generation.

1:54 He has not forgotten his mercy, but has helped his servant Israel,

1:55 For as he promised to have mercy on Abraham our fathers and on their descendants for ever.

The proper answer to the question of what God is like is that He is a loving and merciful God. God is the One who does not fail to give, the One who does not fail to care, the One who is always watching us with concern, the One who visits us and helps us in our time of need.

1:68 (New Common Translation) "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel. The LORD has visited his people and delivered them,

59 And it was the eighth day, and the people came to circumcise the little child, and they wanted to name him Zacharias, after his father's name.

60 But the mother said, "No, he must be named John.

61 The people said to her, "There is no one of your kin with that name.

62 And she asked her father, signaling to him, what name do you want it to be?

63 Zacharias had a writing board brought to him, and he wrote on it, "His name is John," and everyone wondered.

No matter how many of my relatives did not have such a name, I want to obey what God says, even if it goes against precedent, even if it defies tradition. This time, I want to obey. Zacharias had such a strong desire.

No matter how new or ridiculous or unbelievable God's words may seem to us or to the church, if they are God's words, we want to believe them honestly. It is not words that undermine us. Words of men, words that mend appearances, words that seek to maintain a visible organization, are damaging to people, but when we follow words that put God and His Kingdom first, we have God's protection and guidance.

1:64 Then, as he stood there, Zacharias' mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he spoke and praised God.

1:65 And all the neighbors were afraid, and all these things were spoken throughout the mountain villages of Judah,

1:66 And all who heard took it to heart, saying, "What will this child be? The hand of the Lord was with him.

After all, it was God's work that made his mouth unable to speak. People tend to say things they shouldn't say because they have too much on their minds. We cannot save ourselves by saying many things we are anxious about. But we can look to God. God changes our anxious mouths into mouths that praise Him with thanksgiving.

This does not mean that we should not complain. We should be still and silent at such times, praying and waiting for God's work that will come in due time. That is our shortcut. When we change the words of our troubles into words of prayer, and when we drink and offer words of prayer before God, our mouths will be opened to praise Him and to praise Him.

God's hand will be with that born child, and God's protection will be on his feet.

1:67 His father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying

1:68 "Praise be to the Lord God of Israel! God will look back upon his people and vindicate them,

1:69 And he hath set up for us a horn of salvation in the house of David his servant.

1:68 "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel. For the LORD has visited his people and delivered them,

God is the One who cares and visits. He is the One who cares and is always concerned. God has made atonement for His people.

This refers to Jesus who will be born later. God has visited us, caring for us so much that He

dared to sacrifice His only begotten Son to us.

The "horn of salvation." Horns represent power. So here it can be understood that He established the power of salvation, the mighty Savior, in the house of David. It refers to Jesus who was born in the very house of David.

1:70 As He spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets from of old,

1:71 To deliver us from our enemies, and from the hand of him who hates us all.

From the hand of our enemies and from the hand of those who hate us all.

These are truly ominous and depressing words. We have enemies of humanity. One that hates us and wants us to perish. It is the devil. That devil reaches out his hand and tries to grab us. God delivers us from his hand through the redemption of the Lord.

Romans 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin, you serve God and bear fruit that leads to holiness. The end of it is eternal life.

6:23 For the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Colossians 1:13 For God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

1:14 For by him we have redemption through his Son, the forgiveness of sins.

1:72 Thus God had mercy on our fathers, and made his holy covenant with them,

1:73 In remembrance of the oath which he swore unto Abraham our fathers,

1:74 And deliver us out of the hand of our enemies,

1:75 And he will make us to serve him with righteousness and without fear as long as we live.

1:76 Thou, little child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High. Go before the Lord and prepare the way for him,

1:77 For he will make known to his people salvation through the forgiveness of sins.

Yes. Here is mercy.

Where there is sin, there is punishment and death. Here is fear. Here is a walk that is hostile to God. Where there is darkness, there is death.

But here is mercy and forgiveness. There is redemption and light.

1:78 For this is the merciful will of our God. And by his mercy the light of day comes upon us from above,

1:78 And by his mercy shall the light of day shine upon us from above, and shall enlighten them that dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, and shall guide our feet into the way of peace.

This word "Thy will" refers to the heart of love at the center of His deep and profound heart. His deep and compassionate heart visits us, His heart looks upon us and cares for us, and the light of the dawn rises from heaven and shines on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, in sin and in death.

We give thanks for the birth of our Redeemer, Jesus. With this compassion in our hearts, we, too, give thanks for the coming and visitation of God, and we hope to go forward in the midst of forgiveness, without fear at the hands of our enemies who hate us, simply following the heart of deep and profound compassionate love.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for today's worship. Thank you that from the deepest depths of your heart you are full of love, and that in the darkness of our lives, in the shadow of death, you raise the dawn light of redemption against sin and death. Thank you that even though the hands of those who hate us are extended to us, there is redemption and we can serve the Lord well, righteously, and without fear. Bless our families and the people in our community. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.