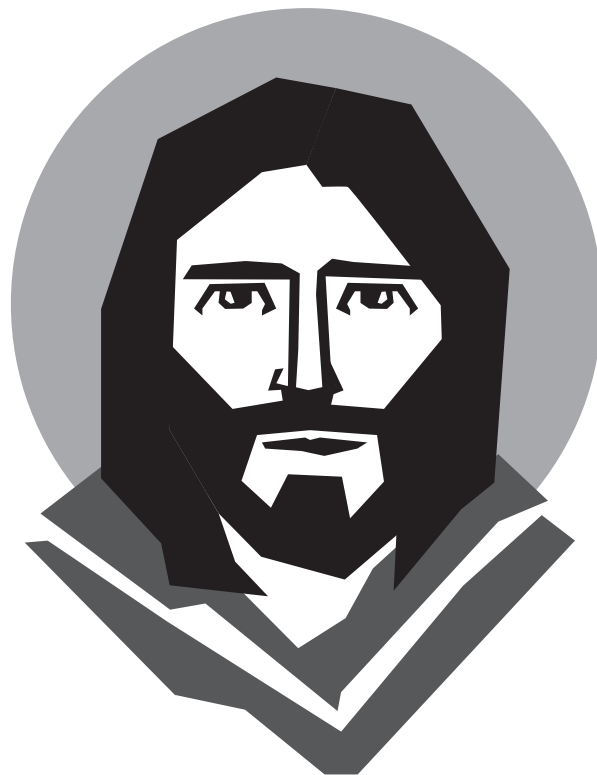
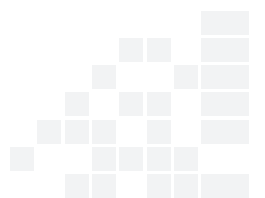
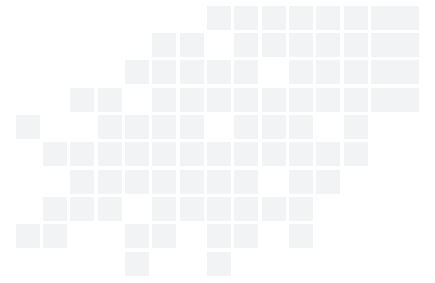


THE REAL **JESUS**



A study through the Gospel of Luke

BOOK 6: HIS PREPARATION





BECOMING A CHRISTIAN



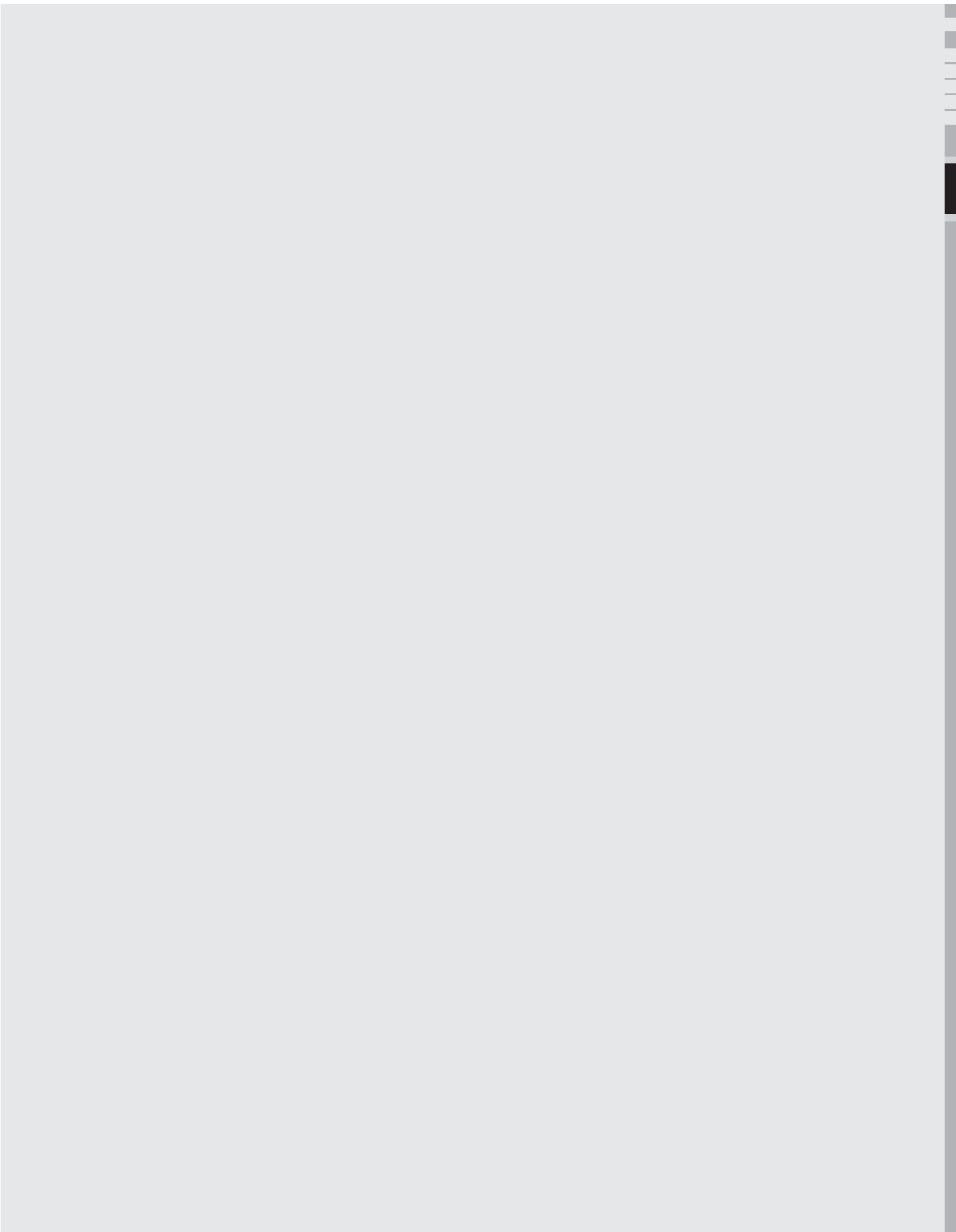
In the Bible, God reveals His truth about how to have eternal life by becoming a believer in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The believer is a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, a true child of God, and one who has been saved by God according to God's grace (undeserved favor). *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How does one become a Christian?

- The Bible, God's word, says that eternal life (salvation) is a free gift of God which cannot be earned or deserved (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- However, we also find in God's word that all people are born sinners and cannot save themselves from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death and separation from God. God's requirement is perfection and no one is perfect (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:3-23; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- God tells us in His word that He is holy, meaning that He is perfect and that He is also just, meaning that He gives to sinners what is deserved, and because of His holiness and justice He must punish sinners. But thankfully, the Bible also says that God is loving and merciful and does not take pleasure in punishing sinners (Exodus 34:6-7; Ephesians 2:4-5).
- God has mercy on sinners by not giving them what they deserve. This is only possible because He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the God-man, to be the substitute for sinners bearing the penalty for their sin and satisfying God's justice (John 1:1,14; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 5:8).
- Jesus said that in order for anyone to have eternal life there must be repentance of sins and faith placed in His substitutionary death on the cross to pay for the penalty of one's sins. This faith must be in Jesus Christ alone not depending on anything else including "good works" (Mark 1:15b; Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:8-9).

What then is the response to these things if one desires to have eternal life and become a Christian?

1. Pray and ask God to forgive you. The Bible says that you must repent of your sins, being ashamed of them, genuinely regretting and grieving over them, and firmly deciding to make an about-face and turn away from sin and your old lifestyle (Acts 3:19-20).
2. Pray and tell God that you place your faith in Jesus Christ alone to save you. The Bible says that for you to become a Christian, you must place your faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ who died on the cross to become your substitute and who took the penalty for your sin upon Himself once and for all (John 3:36).



THE REAL JESUS: HIS PREPARATION

Week Three | November 25, 2018 | Mercy Gets People Talking

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's texts, Luke 1:57–80. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

God shows mercy to His people.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

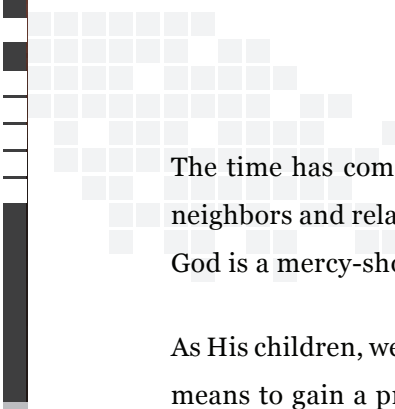
God's mercy should produce humility and praise in those who receive it.

MEDITATE

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people." (Luke 1:68).

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.



The time has come to celebrate the birth of John the Baptist with Zechariah and Elizabeth, as well as their neighbors and relatives. God shows great mercy to this faithful, elderly couple in blessing them with a son. Our God is a mercy-showing God, and we will see several examples of His mercy in our text this week.

As His children, we are the recipients of His great mercy. We benefit from this mercy. To benefit from something means to gain a profit of some kind from it. Because of God's mercy, we gain salvation, joy, peace, and even discipline. Like Elizabeth and Zechariah, this gives us something to talk about with our friends and family. Think of how quick you are to tell everyone good news that affects you. Think of the urgency with which you speak of something that can benefit the people around you. Shouldn't we speak up about the mercy of the Lord to our friends and families?

We'll see in our text today that the people surrounding Elizabeth and Zechariah were talking about little else than the mercy of the Lord that gained the couple a son. What do you talk about with those closest to you? We must be bold witnesses for the Lord. We must use our voices to tell of His good works and His salvation. We share all kinds of good news with others. Are we sharing the greatest news of the Real Jesus?

This good news of a heavenly Father who forgives and pardons our sin and applies the righteousness of His Son to us if we repent and believe is completely undeserved. It's only due to the mercy of the Lord. Knowing our salvation has everything to do with the Real Jesus and nothing to do with our own efforts should produce humility in us. There is no room for boasting in this. We have no space for entitlement. God was not persuaded to extend His mercy to you because of the church you grew up in, who your parents are, or who you married. He hasn't saved you because you went on a mission trip once, because you sponsor a child in Haiti, or because you're a deacon at your local church. Scripture says all our righteous deeds are like a filthy rag to Him (Isaiah 64:6). If you are a child of God, it is only because of Christ's deeds on your behalf. He lived the life you could not live and died the death you should have died. The Real Jesus stands in your place before the Father. This is indeed good news! We humbly receive this gift by placing our faith in our beloved Savior.

In humility, we share this good news with others so they might know our Father too. In gratitude, we praise God for His great mercy. In love, we obey His commands and live for Him. This is our legacy. Zechariah understood this. His neighbors and relatives were convinced his son should be named after him. At one time, surely Zechariah desired a son to carry on his own legacy. But Zechariah, sanctified through suffering, desired only to be obedient to what Gabriel told him to name his son. He was not concerned with personal legacy. He wanted to pursue the legacy of The Real Jesus. Just as Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane "not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42), Zechariah set aside his own desires to fully embrace the Lord's. This is a worthy legacy. When we encounter the Real Jesus, we will deny ourselves and follow Him, even when it contradicts social norms.

👤: *Consider what news you share with your friends and family. If their only exposure to the gospel came from you, would they know the good news that the Real Jesus died for their sins? How can you transform your conversations with others to recount God's mercy in your life?*

👤: *The Real Jesus calls us to obey Him in ways that will confuse and upset the world around us. Can you share a time when following Christ meant going against the culture, and what happened because of your obedience?*

📖 UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

In today's lesson we will study evidences of God's mercy and determine how we should humbly respond as recipients of it.

1. THE PEOPLE REJOICE
2. THE FATHER DISCIPLINES
3. SALVATION HAS COME

GOING DEEPER

+ *This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.*

THE PEOPLE REJOICE

📖 LUKE 1:57-58

Q: *What did Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives hear about her?*

Q: *How did they respond?*

The time has come. Elizabeth has given birth to the son Gabriel promised would come. “And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her” (Luke 1:58). John’s birth is big news in the neighborhood! The sweet, elderly couple on the block, long-since known for their barrenness, has been blessed with an heir. It’s not every day that a barren woman gives birth, much less a woman old enough to be a grandmother. Elizabeth’s friends and family recognize John’s birth for the miracle it is. They rejoice with their neighbor in fulfillment of Gabriel’s words that “many would rejoice at his birth” (v. 14). They rejoice at the Lord’s mercy in providing Elizabeth a son, fulfilling a longing that spanned decades. They also rejoice at the Lord’s mercy in removing Elizabeth’s reproach among people (v. 25). Just as Elizabeth’s son would be a forerunner to Christ, her shame is removed by God as a foreshadowing of Christ’s removal of our reproach once and for all (Isaiah 53:4, Hebrews 12:2). The Real Jesus doesn’t just show mercy through what He gives to us. He shows us mercy in what He takes from us too.

Jesus reveals the Father to us by showing us what He’s like. He reveals Himself to us as He pours out His mercy on us. As His image bearers (Genesis 1:27), we reflect His character to the world. Therefore, we show mercy to others as we have been shown mercy (James 2:13). This means we forgive the neighbor who wrongs us. It means we live compassionately toward the vulnerable. We tell others of His mercy as we praise Him for it. Isaiah says, “I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that He has granted them according to His compassion, according to the abundance of His steadfast love.” (Isaiah 63:7). Recounting literally means telling someone about something. Christians should be recounting the mercy of the Lord to others.

We are the recipients of God’s mercy. We’ve been forgiven of all our sins. Christ’s sinless life and sacrificial death on our behalf are accepted by God. Our response to God’s undeserved favor is humility. Nothing we’ve ever done or will ever do could warrant God showing us His mercy. Our joy comes from knowing the almighty God chooses to bless us with His mercy. There is no room for boasting, only humility. We, of all people, have much to say to our friends and family about the mercy of the Lord. Like Elizabeth’s neighbors and relatives, we should rejoice in the Real Jesus. All our rejoicing will naturally lead to recounting. Ask God to open your eyes to His acts of mercy toward you. See the evidence and rejoice!

♀: *When you consider that Christ bore your sins on the cross, do you also consider that He bore your shame, too? How should we respond to knowing that Christ endured the shame of the cross for us (Hebrews 12:2)? In what ways can we live out our gratitude for His great mercy?*

♀: *Do you experience joy when God's mercy is evident in your life? How can we cultivate hearts that rejoice in the mercy of the Lord? What Scriptures can help us with this?*

♀: *What are some examples of how we can show mercy to others?*

THE FATHER DISCIPLINES

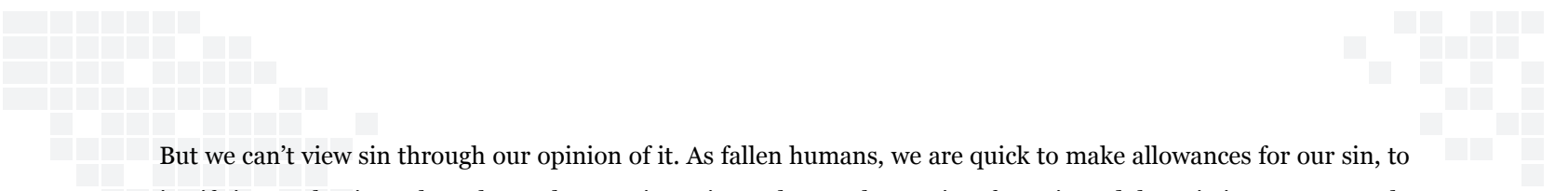
☒ LUKE 1:59-66 AND HEBREWS 12:5-11

♀: *Why didn't Elizabeth's relatives want her to name her son John?*

♀: *What happened when Zechariah wrote on the tablet that his son would be named John?*

Beyond the obvious evidence of God's mercy in giving Elizabeth and Zechariah an unexpected son, God is merciful to Elizabeth by removing her reproach among the people. Now we witness the mercy God shows Zechariah. When Gabriel told Zechariah of God's plan, Zechariah responded in doubt. His unbelief was immediately disciplined, and he was unable to speak for the next nine months.

It is tempting to see the penalty as harsh for the crime; after all, the news Gabriel delivered that day was unbelievable.



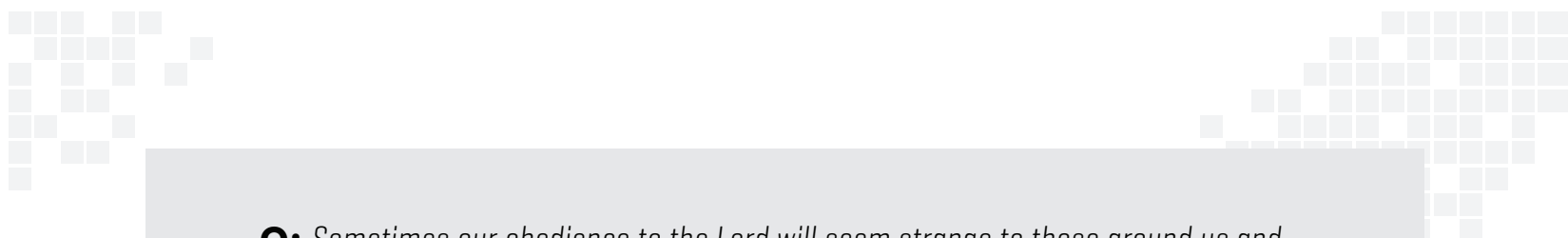
But we can't view sin through our opinion of it. As fallen humans, we are quick to make allowances for our sin, to justify it. But that is not how the Real Jesus views sin. He knows the gravity of our sin and the pain it causes not only to us, but to our relationship with our Father. Sin is serious business. The 17th-century preacher John Owen said, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you."

When God disciplines Zechariah for his sin of unbelief, He is showing mercy. God's discipline is an evidence of Zechariah's sonship. Scripture teaches that God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:5). When He disciplines, "God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline" (v. 7)? His discipline is for our good and so that we may share His holiness (v. 10). This is a great mercy! And God's mercy in returning Zechariah's speech got him talking. Literally!

What does Zechariah do with his restored abilities? He blesses the Lord (Luke 1:64). You might think he would be bitter about not being able to talk for so long. What God was doing in their lives was truly miraculous and he couldn't talk about it with his wife. They weren't able to process their excitement and wonder and dreams for their son or their fears about his future. He missed out on these things, and yet, when God loosed his tongue, Zechariah used it to praise Him. This is how we should respond to the Lord's discipline.

The Psalmist said, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray" (Psalm 119:67), "It was good for me that I was afflicted that I might learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71), and "In faithfulness You have afflicted me" (Psalm 119:75). When the Real Jesus disciplines us, it is merciful and for our good. Zechariah is not bitter about the Lord afflicting him. He praises God, knowing God has shown him great mercy. Encounters with the Real Jesus leave us blessing our Father.

Thabiti Anyabwile writes in *Christ-Centered Exposition (Luke)*, "Zechariah's praise is contagious." His praise of God's mercy gets the people talking and praising too. "Through all the hill country of Judea" (Luke 1:65), the people were talking about what God was doing. When God's mercy was evident in Zechariah's life, they responded in reverent fear of God. They wondered who John would be since it was evident that the Lord's hand was with him (v. 66). Zechariah's praise inspires reverence, conversation, and contemplation in the people around him. Let's cause the people around us to wonder as we praise God for His great mercy.


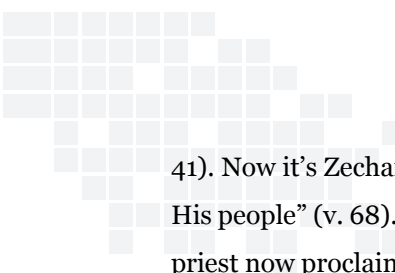
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- Q: *Sometimes our obedience to the Lord will seem strange to those around us and cause them to wonder, just like Zechariah's friends wondered at his naming his son John. How can we encourage one another to be steadfast in obedience to the Lord when public opinion is against us? What Scriptures can we use to encourage each other?*
- Q: *Zechariah immediately blessed the Lord when He showed him mercy and returned his ability to speak. When God shows you mercy, do you respond like Zechariah? If not, what steps can you take to be aware of God's mercy to you and be thankful for it?*
- Q: *The people recognized that God was at work in Zechariah's family, and their response was reverent fear of the Lord. God is at work in your life too. Are you being a faithful witness to your neighbors and relatives about His activity in your life? In what ways can you be a more effective witness?*

SALVATION HAS COME

☞ LUKE 1:67-80

- Q: *What happened as Zechariah praised the Lord? (v. 67)*
- Q: *What does Zechariah say his son will be called?*

The Holy Spirit has been very active in Zechariah's family. Gabriel promised that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (v. 15). Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit when Mary came to visit her (v.



41). Now it's Zechariah's turn (v. 67). He says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people" (v. 68). Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Zechariah announces that salvation has come! The once-doubting priest now proclaims with full assurance what God has done before Christ is even born.


Encounters with the Real Jesus produce great and genuine faith. He says God has raised up a "horn of salvation" for us (v. 69). A horn is a symbol of strength and power. Zechariah is saying that in our weakness, God has provided His strength (2 Corinthians 12:9). The horn of salvation represents His strength to save us, because we are too weak to accomplish this on our own. He meets our helplessness with His power to save. Salvation is an act of great mercy. We don't deserve it. We can't earn it. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even while we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Verses 70–75 discuss how the Lord has delivered His people from bondage because of the covenant He made with their fathers to show mercy. He is not just referring to their physical bondage, but to their spiritual bondage as well. Prior to God's salvation in our lives, we are all in bondage to sin. We don't like to think of ourselves as without freedom. We naively believe we have autonomy over our lives. Even as believers, we may verbally affirm God's sovereignty, while our actions attempt to usurp His authority. Any time we think we know better than He does, we are practically denying His rightful rule. We willfully worship other things, such as food, our schedules, and our reputations. God, in His mercy, liberates us from bondage so we can be free to worship Him (v. 74). We are humbly dependent on His mercy to produce the freedom that leads to worshiping Him.

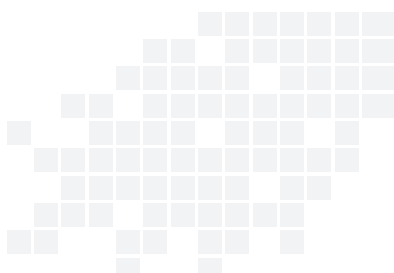
Zechariah transitions from his own worship of the Lord to reveal his son's service to the Lord, answering the question everyone has been asking (v. 66). He knows that John's role in the kingdom will be great. He knows that John himself will be great. But he also knows where John's greatness lies. Thabiti Anyabwile writes in *Christ-Centered Exposition (Luke)*, "Greatness comes from serving the Lord, not from serving ourselves." The thing that was so great about John was that he was wholly dedicated to serving the Real Jesus. His entire existence centered on this purpose. What an honor for anyone!

It would be easy to imagine that a person so honored by God might begin to feel entitled to fame and privilege because of his purpose and because the Lord specifically chose him. But after decades of faithfully serving as the forerunner to Christ, John tells his followers, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). John had a significant following, but he gladly pointed them away from himself and to the Real Jesus.

In our own lives, it's easy to build a following through social media. Do we invest our energy in building our own following or do we, like John, point our followers to Christ? Parents, do we allow our children to build their kingdoms online or do we disciple them to participate with all the saints in building God's kingdom? As recipients of God's mercy, we should be the most willing to decrease ourselves so He will increase and others will come to know Him.



Salvation has come. Let's use whatever influence we have to tell people this good news!



- ♀: *What are some practical ways we can decrease so the Lord can increase?*
- ♀: *The world needs the Real Jesus, not us. How can we guard against having a "Savior complex" and be steadfast in pointing others to Christ for their needs?*
- ♀: *It is good to be needy before the Lord. When we're weak, then we're strong [2 Corinthians 12:10]. How can we embrace our weakness as a means of magnifying His strength? Can you think of examples in Scripture where God used someone's weakness to display His glory?*

NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

- ♀: *We typically do everything possible to limit our risk of suffering. What Scriptures can you think of that point to the truth that our suffering can be a good thing?*
- ♀: *Sometimes we're too busy to notice the evidences of God's mercy in our lives. Scripture says each day is met with new mercies [Lamentations 3:22-23]. Take some time to share evidences of God's mercy in your life. How can you be faithful friends by helping one another take notice of His mercy each day?*

Q: *God frees us from our bondage to sin. What sins has He freed you from? Are you using your freedom to worship Him? What are some verses that always stir your heart to worship the Real Jesus?*

PRAY

+ *Use this prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- Father, You are rich in mercy toward Your people. You bless us with Your undeserved gift of salvation. We are not worthy of it. We are humbled by it. May our praise be contagious. May Your words be on our lips and our praise of You be heard by our neighbors and relatives. May we rejoice in You. Help us to see Your discipline as a gift and be trained by it. Thank You for meeting our weakness with Your strength. You alone have the power to save. Bless the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 1:59 Circumcision on the eighth day is commanded in Genesis 17:12–14; 21:4; Leviticus 12:3.

LUKE 1:70 “As he spoke ... from of old” emphasizes the fulfillment and continuity between the old and new covenants (cf. vv. 72–73).

**All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes and Christ-Centered Exposition (Luke).*



