

Zechariah's Song

Luke 1:57-80

The sense of expectancy of future joy is written all over the Christmas story. But perhaps no-one expresses that better than Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist.

Joy in unexpected places

The most striking thing about Zechariah's song, is that he's not happy about what you'd expect him to be happy about. Something greater is filling his vision.

You would expect him to be filled with joy at the birth of his son. After all, he and his wife had suffered from years of infertility (and that should tell us that sometimes life is hard, even for good people). And the circumstances of Zechariah's life had caused him to struggle to believe.

When life is hard we can fall into the trap of 'the most wished for gift'. That if only we had this thing (whatever that is) things would be right. But that leaves us hopelessly vulnerable to change.

Instead, Zechariah's joy is rooted deeper.

Joy at God's visitation (and in promises kept)

Zechariah is rejoicing over something that is happening in another family: the house of David, the baby Mary is carrying. Real joy comes in being found by the God who visits us in Christ, who shines a light in our darkness. And he knows that what God is doing is in fulfillment of all His promises through the prophets. Whereas before Zechariah couldn't believe, now he does.

Joy at the Coming King

God is doing something through the house of David – Israel's great king. It is the coming of the promised King, the greater Son of David. This king is going to come and rescue his people: from our greatest enemies - sin and death. And that is why Zechariah is filled with joy. Often we look elsewhere for rescue – to money, or career, or relationships. But when we make those things ultimate things, they end up controlling us. That is why we need a king to rescue us.

And he rescues us so that we might serve him

Joy in the Story of Another

Zechariah is over half-way through his song, before he mentions his own son! That is because real joy comes, not from thinking you are at the centre, but realizing that Jesus is, and serving Him and others.

But how can develop the attitude of a servant when everything tells us we are the ones who should be served? By realising that this King who has come, Jesus, is the Servant King, who gave his life to rescue us. When we see that, our attempts to put ourselves first take on new light

So joy comes by walking in Jesus' shadow, and that is a light far brighter than anything else.