

SING OF GOD'S RESCUE
FIRST WED IN ADVENT

LUKE 1:67-79
DEC 3, 2014

⁶⁷ And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,
⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us;
⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
⁷⁴ that we, being delivered from the hand 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
in the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
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."

Ever get a song stuck in your head?
That may be especially easy to do right now
with all the catchy Christmas music all around
on radio, in mall, even outdoors at gas station.
Maybe you find yourself humming or singing along.
But imagine if you couldn't sing or hum or even speak.
The same things might go over and over in head
without a chance to get out.
I imagine this happening to Zechariah during 9 months
after angel told him he and Elizabeth would have a child
and when he expressed doubt about this
he was told he would be unable to speak until it happened
As a priest, he would have heard plenty of songs,
the ancient psalms used in worship
Phrases from them and from the prophets
may have played over and over in his head.
His mind may have also been working through
what we would say if he could, echoing those thoughts.

Now child has been born. He has affirmed his name is John.
Now his voice is set free and out pours a song
that may have been stuck in his head for months.
In it we hear refrains for us to sing along to.
How do you get a song out of your head that is stuck there?
easiest way is to replace it with another one.
When we get songs of fear, anger, pain or grief in our head,
God replaces it with his song of hope, love and comfort.
So that with Zechariah, we can...

SING OF RESCUE FROM HATEFUL ENEMIES
SING OF SERVING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS
SING OF FORGIVENESS BY GOD'S MERCY

SING OF RESCUE FROM HATEFUL ENEMIES

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⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,

Have you ever felt like turning on some music
when house feels empty and you feel alone
only to realize it is already on and it still feels too quiet?
Zechariah and Elizabeth may have had feeling like that.
after growing old without sound of children in house.
They may have felt alone, forgotten.
In fact, whole nation of Israel felt like that.
For centuries they were surrounded & occupied by enemies,
controlled by heavy hand of hateful lords.
And God's prophets had been silent. God seemed far off.
The last prophets who spoke, Zechariah and Malachi,
had foretold the coming restoration of God's people
But the beautiful melodies of mercy promised their forefathers
was drowned out by the blaring grating taunting chants
of those who hated them.
Maybe you know that feeling as well.
If there are those who love you, you see them too rarely

but you spend days surrounded by mean hateful people
and that controls how you feel, what you do.
But now God has broken the silence with Angel message
that has come true and a new prophet is here.
God has visited them. God remembers his promises.
When we are sick and suffering, it is good to be visited.
It gives us something to think about beside our troubles.
It helps us stop thinking about just the negative,
all the bad things others do, all the things we can't do
and instead think of what we would like to do.
Now Zechariah can...

SING OF SERVING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

⁷⁴ that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

The problem with enemies is they not only what they do to us
but how they control what we are able to do.
And the main way they can do that is by fear.
This is a main weapon of our real enemies,
which is not other people but sin, death and the devil.
We are lured and chased into sinful behavior
by fear of missing out, fear of not having what we want,
fear of what others might think or say.
Then, when we do what we know is wrong,
we are trapped by fears on the other side,
fear of being found out, fear of punishment,
guilt and shame traps us in despair.
But what Zechariah looks forward to now that he sees God near
is serving him without fear
in holiness and righteousness all our days.
This is what we want, a song in our head that inspires us
to love, kindness, patience, helping one another,
being pure and good always.
But as much as we want to be pure and good
it is hard to know how to get there.
We start out but keep finding selves stuck back in old ways.
One reason songs we are tired of keep getting stuck in head
is we can't remember how it ends so it just starts over.
But, as Zechariah says, God remembers his covenant
and he reminds us of it so we can get on to another song.

SING OF FORGIVENESS BY GOD'S MERCY

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
in the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
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.”

You might think Zechariah would sing about his son just born
but that is not the main theme of this song.

In v. 69 he talks about deliverance coming from
the house of David, which is tribe of Judah.

Zechariah & his family are Levites, not related to David.

Zechariah's son, John, will simply go before the Lord
to prepare his way

As John himself says later, he must decrease
while Jesus, the one he points to, increases.

This is the key to the knowledge of salvation he shares.

It is not about us, who we are, what we do.

It is about what Jesus does for us.

Our salvation comes from the forgiveness of our sins
because of the tender mercy of our God.

This is how the sun rises on those who sit in darkness,
overshadowed by deathly fear, shame, grief, bitterness.

It is God's grace that brings us to peace with God
and that, in turn, guides our feet into the way of peace.

God has come to visit us in the person of Jesus.

He has come to sing us the love song of mercy.
to sing us the lullaby of peace
to stir us with the anthem of hope.

This God comes to visit us again today in his word
and he is here today in Holy Communion

Here again he remembers and repeats his covenant.

This is how we get the old songs of sin & fear out of our heads.

SING OF RESCUE FROM HATEFUL ENEMIES

They continue to chant their taunts all around us,
as Satan seeks to trap us in sin,
but God has delivered us from them. Now we can..

SING OF SERVING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

The refrain we want to repeat over and over
is serving God in holiness all our days,
and the way we get there is when God makes us...

SING OF FORGIVENESS BY GOD'S MERCY

The lyrics of this song are not about
what others have done to us or what we can do
but about what Jesus has done for us.
He has forgiven our sins. This is what lights the path to peace.