



PEACE THAT IS FOUND ONLY IN JESUS

Luke 1:76–79

Key Verse: 1:79 (ESV)

“...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

How are you doing? Actually it's one of my opening questions. Not just the casual, “How are you doing? I'm good.” How are you doing, *really*? Kids are no exemption: how are you doing? Students, finals are coming up or already here for some: how are you doing? Bible teachers, shepherds, and leaders: how are you doing? Single people: how are you doing? Married people: how are you doing? Parents: how are we doing? Whoever and wherever you are: do you have God's peace in your heart? We're at this time of the year when the world glows with decorations, but most people are still sitting in darkness and without peace. Isn't it ironic? It's supposed to be  the most wonderful time of the year . And yet, anxieties and stress are off the charts, caused by financial problems, social injustice, and non-stop wars around the world, just to name a few. How the heck can we have peace in this dark and troubled world?

Today we're going to look at the prophetic song of Zechariah, not the whole song but just the last part where he talks about Jesus who is like the sunrise. He brings light to those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guides our feet into the way of peace. Even though this passage was from 2,000 years ago, it's still so relevant today. Who here could use some peace? I think many of us have tried to find peace in many different ways. But what's the result? We end up being more anxious, find more troubles, and feel more burdened. The truth is, true peace can never be found in this world; it can be found only in Jesus. This peace that Jesus gives doesn't just affect one part of our lives, but every part. He guides us to peace with God, peace with ourselves, and peace with others. May God help us see the rising sunlight of Jesus through His word and experience this true peace, peace that is found only in Jesus.

First, let's talk about Zechariah. Let's look at 1:67. Who is Zechariah? He's a priest, a descendant of Aaron, and married to Elizabeth. The Bible says that both of them are righteous before God (1:6). However, they have a couple of problems. First, they're childless, due to Elizabeth's barrenness. And to make things worse, they live under Roman oppression. Oh, what's it like to be a priest

at that time? As a priest, there are high expectations for him. He can't make mistakes, not a single one. And being childless doesn't help. On the other hand, the Romans are making sure everything Zechariah does is controlled, as he witnesses a lot of injustice around him. What a burden for this priest! He must have heard all the stories of God's mighty work in the past, God's voice thundering from the heavens — striking down his enemies, but in his lifetime, nothing, silence. Perhaps he's wondering, "Is God still listening?"

Finally, God breaks the silence by sending an angel to announce that Zechariah and Elizabeth would have a son in their old age. However, Zechariah's response is not 100% a priestly response. Instead of believing and rejoicing, he doubts, "Lord, I'm old... and my wife is also... advanced in age". But does he forget who God is? The Creator of the heavens and the earth, who rescued his people from slavery, brought down the walls of Jericho, shut the mouths of lions, sent fire from heaven, and protected his servants in the super hot oven? We could go on and on about God's miraculous works he did in the past. Zechariah knows the Bible, and he can probably recite these things from memory. But when God tells him he will have a son in his 50s, he doubts? As a result of his doubt, he is silenced, unable to speak (1:20). This must be a humbling experience, since he's used to talking. Maybe Elizabeth asks him, "Babe, I didn't know you were such a good listener!" Zechariah might feel isolated, regretful for doubting, and even frustrated because he's unable to share with his friends this miraculous promise. Sometimes when we doubt, it's not God isolating us, but we isolate ourselves and put ourselves in this same dark place. We become spiritually mute, unable to praise God and without peace in our hearts. During darkness, we have two options. Either we keep suffering, or we meditate on God's words. Zechariah chooses to meditate on God's words. So, as soon as he can speak, what's the first thing he does? He praises God! It seems he's been praising God during his isolation. During all the challenges he's facing, he's still praising God. Only the true peace of Jesus can help us praise God even during trials, darkness, and burdens. Even in the darkest of places, we can experience God's peace.

Now let's look at Zechariah's prophecy. In this first part of his prophecy, verses 68-75, Zechariah talks about God's faithfulness and mercy in sending a mighty Savior, a "horn of salvation," who rescues His people from their enemies. As a reminder, the name Jesus means "the Lord is salvation." He came to save us all from our greatest enemy, Satan, who really hates us. Spiritually speaking, each

one of us is so weak and vulnerable. But Jesus is the stronger man who can protect us from Satan's relentless attacks that keep putting us down repeatedly. And Jesus our Savior enables us to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days (1:74b–75). It means from our student days, our single days, our married days with little ones, all the way into our old age: we are living before God and really serving him in holiness and righteousness.

Today, we're going to focus on the last part of Zechariah's prophecy, where Jesus is described as the "sunrise from on high." He brings salvation, forgiveness of sins, light to those who are sitting in darkness, and guides our feet into the way of peace. Let's all read verses 76–77. Of course, Zechariah is ecstatic about his miraculous son! He could write a whole song about him. But he doesn't. Instead, his song, from verses 68–79, focuses almost entirely on Jesus. And in these two verses, John's role is clear – he is to point people to Jesus through whom they would gain "the knowledge of salvation."

What is "the knowledge of salvation"? It's not just head knowledge; it's knowledge that changes our hearts, and our behavior. We gain this knowledge not just through study but through repentance (Luke 3:3–8). Do you have this "knowledge of salvation"? Realizing how sinful we are is just the first step. To have real "knowledge of salvation", we need to realize that only through Jesus our sins, all of them, are truly forgiven. The Bible says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Salvation is not in our own efforts, not in good deeds, and not in anyone else; salvation is in Jesus alone. Through experiencing the forgiveness of sins in Jesus, we come to have the saving knowledge of God himself (Jer.31:34).

Let's all read verse 78. Here Zechariah beautifully describes Jesus as the "sunrise from on high," sent because of God's tender mercy. Who here has seen the sunrise? So you know how captivating it is. Watching it at Lake Michigan is breathtaking. As the sun rises little by little, you start to see its rays stretch across the horizon. You start to feel its warmth, and the darkness slowly fades away. No matter how dark the night may feel, the sunrise always comes through. In the same way, Jesus is the faithful sunrise from on high. He never fails to bring his

light and his peace, even when we feel lost or overwhelmed. This Jesus is a constant reminder of God's tender mercy.

Let's all read verse 79. Zechariah continues to describe the purpose of the "sunrise" Jesus brings, "to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace". This peace is not like, "I have peace with God, so leave me alone." This peace isn't just a feeling, nor is it peace in only some areas of our lives. It's a holistic peace that brings us *peace with God, peace with ourselves, and peace with others*.

First, peace with God. True peace begins when we are reconciled with God through Jesus his Son. By putting our trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, our sins are all paid off, and we are justified by faith. The Bible says, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom.5:1). Our sins separate us from God and make us deserve of His just punishment. But God loves us. The Bible says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus took our place of punishment to give us this peace with God (Isa.53:5).

Second, peace with ourselves. After being reconciled with God, we have a new identity. The Bible says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor.5:17). This means we are freed from all our guilt, shame, and burdens. So, when we look in the spiritual mirror, we don't see all these dirty sins of the past; rather, we see God's unconditional love and His tender mercy. We see Jesus. And with confidence, we can draw near to his throne of grace. So, the next time we wonder if "I'm good enough or worthy enough," let's meditate on God's truth to remind us of who we are in Jesus.

And last but not least, peace with others. This might be the hardest part. Do you know why? It's hard because we must humble ourselves. And it's not easy to be humble and loving all the time. But if we truly have peace with God, and peace with ourselves, Jesus will guide our feet into the way of peace with others as well.

In Genesis, Jacob was a man who had no peace in any part of his life. Even from his mother's womb, he was already competing with his twin brother Esau. His

childhood was a struggle to see who would gain the birthright and his father's blessing. After Jacob cheated to get both, he ran off to his mother's hometown to pursue Rachel. He worked 14 long years for her and ended up with three other wives as well. Still his heart was restless. He then pursued wealth and eventually had all the flocks and herds, in today's slang we say, "not only he got the rizz, he also secured the bag". But all these still left him burdened and no peace.

Through an all-night wrestling match with a stranger, because Jacob realized that he had seen God face to face and yet his life was spared. As the sun was rising in the morning, though he was limping, he finally had inner peace. It's only when Jacob met God face to face and experienced God's forgiving grace could he have peace with God, peace with himself, and peace with others. This was just a glimpse of Jesus, the rising sun who came to guide each one of us to the way of peace. Today, so many people chase their dreams and ambitions, but instead of finding peace, they end up becoming troublemakers, both for themselves and others. But Jesus came to change all of that. He calls us to be peacemakers, saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matt.5:9).

Speaking of troublemaker... At a very young age, I was already a great sinner. I was lying, stealing, fighting, and jumping from one girlfriend to another during my 5th grade. Outwardly, I was this happy boy, always laughing, making jokes, and bullying other kids. But inwardly, I was lonely, trapped in darkness and sin. My whole life I lived to please people. I was good at everything, and people loved me, but I had no peace. During high school, I met Paul Shin at Warren Park, who invited me to a Bible study. I only said yes because he was good at tennis. During that time, I learned that I was the worst sinner. So, what did I do? I tried to please God by doing everything around the church. I babysat, I drove students, played music, and even danced. Remember that? People loved me, but I still had no peace. Then I thought, if I get married and have kids, I would finally be content. So, I pursued all the women in church, but I was only boyfriend material. One day, Little Sarah shared with me her life testimony, and I learned there's nothing I can do to earn God's love, grace, and forgiveness. It's a free gift through Jesus—"Knowledge of Salvation." Finally, I met Jesus' face to face. And after wrestling with God's word in the Book of Mark, I realized I was like the man covered with leprosy who came to Jesus and begged, "If you will, you can make me clean" (Mark 1:40). I came to Him with all my burdens, my sins, and my brokenness. And Jesus reached out His hand, touched this sinner, and said, "I will; be clean" (Mark 1:41). Jesus was guiding me to have peace with God, peace

with myself, and peace with others. And I felt peace I had never felt before. It was a heavenly experience. At that moment, I was so thankful because of Jesus. I wanted to build a tent there. But Jesus guides me to have peace with others as well. I apologized to everyone I've hurt, even to those who didn't know me. They forgave me as well. I was so content I thought I didn't need to get married. I was going to be Father Barry. But my Bible teachers said, "Chill out, you don't have that gift." I was sitting in darkness, but Jesus was the sunrise who shone His light on me. I was a troublemaker and restless, but God changed my heart and gave me true peace—peace with God, peace with myself, and peace with others, and it's found only in Jesus.

So, how about you? Do you have this kind of peace? Today we learned that this kind of peace can only be found in Jesus. He guides our feet to have peace with God. Through God's tender mercy, our sins are forgiven, and our relationship with Him is restored. This reconciliation leads to peace within us, freeing us from guilt, shame, and fear, and allowing us to live confidently as new creations in Christ. And this inner peace enables us to have peace with others, having love and humility to forgive, reconcile, and build meaningful relationships, just as God pursued us and reconciled with us. Just as the sunrise is faithful and drives away the darkness and fills the world with light, Jesus is faithful and merciful, and He drives away fear, anxiety, burdens, and doubts. May the light of Jesus drive out darkness in our lives and guide our feet into the way of peace.