

Conversations on
Luke 1:68–79

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Listen to a music video of “Let There Be Peace on Earth” by Angel Choir (bit.ly/PeaceOnEarthAngelChoir). What images of peace and blessing would you like to say to these children?

WHAT is important to know?

Although Zechariah’s is quite possibly the most endearing, heartwarming prophecy over a child in the biblical text, what makes the prophecy so compelling is that Zechariah is not primarily concerned about himself or about his miraculous son. Instead, Zechariah’s prophecy exalts God, points to the dominant work of the Dayspring, and foretells God’s tender mercies on upcoming generations of God’s covenant people. Zechariah conveys a sense of wonder that he is part of it. He—with all his arrogance and unbelief—basks now in the love, forgiveness, mercy of God. (*Robin Gallaher Branch*)

- ✪ What are the most important themes in Zechariah’s prophecy?
- ✪ In what ways does John the Baptist prepare the way for God’s coming Messiah?
- ✪ What comforts and challenges does Zechariah’s prophecy present?

WHERE is God in these words?

Zechariah identifies John as one who makes way for the work of the incarnation by delivering knowledge about salvation and forgiveness. Offered because of God’s “tender mercy,” the forgiveness coming through the incarnation will make it possible to see differently. New sight, resulting from the dawn breaking in and giving light, insinuates possible paradigm shifts and the reversals identified with Luke’s Gospel. Perhaps those identified as enemies earlier in the song may become friends. In fact, Luke’s Gospel and Acts feature many such reconciliations—the conversions of Zacchaeus and Paul and the openness to Gentiles being typical. (*Rosetta E. Ross*)

- ✪ What messages about God’s activities does Zechariah’s prophecy convey?
- ✪ What aspects of God’s character are presented in Zechariah’s words?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

This ancient hymn is set in two parts. The first deals with social redemption, salvation of the people; the second addresses more personal redemption, salvation of the soul. Repentance that leads to forgiveness is to be John’s message, repentance and redemption that are both personal and corporate. We now look deeply into our hearts to see what changes may be needed, to understand where we must turn around and head in a different direction in our lives. We also ask where repentance and redemption are needed in the social and political realities of the world in which we live. (*Randle R. Mixon*)

- ✪ Why is it important to recognize “the tender mercy of our God” as the expression of God’s work?
- ✪ In what ways does the forgiveness of sins mentioned by Zechariah play an important role in your life?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

Zechariah’s hymn makes clear that true peace—in our hearts and in our world—will come only when we are right with God, when we have laid aside our own ambitions and passions, or at least turned them over to God. The condition of souls and the condition of creation is troubled by self-centeredness, self-absorption, and failure to understand what is available in true communion with God, what God has offered us in the ancient covenant and offers us still in the coming of Jesus, the Christ. Though we may live in between times, when we do not yet fully walk in the way of peace, Zechariah promises that his little boy, John, will prepare us to bridge those times as we live toward God’s reign in hope. (*Randle R. Mixon*)

- ✪ To what new dimensions of Christian life is God calling you or your congregation through Zechariah’s prophecy?
- ✪ In what ways is God now calling you to serve God “without fear”?
- ✪ What are places in your life where you can receive light in the midst of darkness and be guided in the “way of peace”?

God, guide us as we seek to spread your light in this world of darkness. Amen.