

## The Christmas Visitor At Our Door.

Text: Luke 1:57-80

Suggested Hymns:

23 (1), 307, 628, 839, 23 (2)

- 1) Are We Ready for Jesus Christmas Visit?
- 2) Do We Recognise Our Visitor as the Son of God?
- 3) Do We Appreciate His Gifts?
- 4) Do we joyfully serve?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 1:57-80, *<sup>57</sup> Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. <sup>58</sup> When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. <sup>59</sup> So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. <sup>60</sup> His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John."*

*<sup>61</sup> But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." <sup>62</sup> So they made signs to his father -- what he would have him called. <sup>63</sup> And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled.*

*<sup>64</sup> Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. <sup>65</sup> Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. <sup>66</sup> And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.*

*<sup>67</sup> Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: <sup>68</sup> "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, <sup>69</sup> And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, <sup>70</sup> As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, <sup>71</sup> That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, <sup>72</sup> To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, <sup>73</sup> The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: <sup>74</sup> To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, <sup>75</sup> In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.*

<sup>76</sup> *“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, <sup>77</sup> To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, <sup>78</sup> Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; <sup>79</sup> To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

<sup>80</sup> *So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Have you ever stood on a street corner or in a shopping mall a few days before Christmas? Have you noticed the elaborate preparations for Christmas. We go “all out” in our celebration of the Christmas festival. In spite of all the commotion, however, this could well be Australia’s Advent season lament:

*Behold a stranger at the door!  
He gently knocks, has knocked before,  
Has waited long, is waiting still;  
You treat no other friend so ill.*

The bedlam of our modern Christmas observance drowns out the Saviour’s pleading voice, as recorded in Revelation 3:20, <sup>20</sup> *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

Because we know that Christmas is nothing without Christ, we appreciate the Advent season. It helps to deglamourise the non-essentials. It centers our attention more directly on *The Christmas Visitor at Our Door*.

As the warm glow of Advent fades away into the radiant cheer of Christmas, we pray with Martin Luther:

*Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,  
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,  
Within my heart, that it may be*

*A quiet chamber kept for Thee.*

May the Lord bless our meditation as we consider the Christmas Visitor at our door.

### **1. Are We Ready for Jesus Christmas Visit?**

The Christmas Visitor stands unnoticed at many a door because people fail to comprehend the full significance of the words of Zacharias: ***“God has visited His people.”*** God is looking in on His people, deeply concerned about their great need. It has been His concern for a long time. God planned this visit already several thousand years before Zacharias ***“was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.”***

How foolish for people to lose themselves at Christmas time in the irrelevant frills of the Christmas season and to forget that the coming of our Christmas Visitor, which is the one event, around which God has shaped the course of world history!

Every noble and sublime thought in God’s mind culminates in the visit of Jesus who now stands at our door. We are not ready for Christmas unless we are interested in that which interests God these days. Are we possibly cramming everything into our celebration except that which alone can make it a Christmas? God has visited His people in the birth of Jesus Christ. That is the heart of Christmas.

*Are we willing to let God have His way?* There was a time when Zacharias found it difficult to understand certain features of God’s Christmas plan with his own thinking. He was not willing to let God have His way.

Nine months earlier he doubted that God could keep His promise and give him and Elizabeth a son in their old age, a son whom God wanted to use as a forerunner for the Messiah. God’s way of teaching Zacharias that nothing is impossible with Him was to deprive him of the power of speech until after the child was born.

During those nine months of silence Zacharias learned to take God at His word in all humility. When his relatives decided that the child should be named after his father, - Zacharias, in obedience to God, wrote: ***“His name is John”*** — God planned it that way. And that way it shall be!

There is much that is incomprehensible about the coming of the Christmas Visitor at our door, the birth of Jesus. There are important features of the Christmas story which human reason will never be able to comprehend. God's entire plan of salvation through Christ is riddled with puzzles for the human mind. No doctrine has been more ridiculed than the statement of our Creed: *"Conceived by the Holy Spirit."*

Let us make sure that we will let God have His way, especially at Christmas time. We certainly have good reason to stand in holy awe of the announcement: *"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."* But doubt it we dare not, because God has spoken.

The Person who always wants rational explanations for what he believes will eventually find himself even more speechless than Zacharias was. When he stands in the presence of Jesus Christ who said: *"I am the Truth,"* he will be utterly speechless.

Rather, blessed the person who has the humble faith of a Zacharias as a free gift from God, lets God's Word be final in everything, and asks no more questions once God has spoken. Be sure that you approach all the great mysteries of Christmas in that humble frame of mind. Whatever in His coming to redeem you, you do not understand, accept by faith and be satisfied. Then, and then only, are you ready for His coming.

## **2. Do We Recognise Our Visitor as the Son of God?**

Getting ready for Jesus visit is not enough. It is even more important that we see in Him the Son of God come down from heaven. Zacharias describes the Christmas Visitor in beautiful poetic language. He states that his own son John will be *"the prophet of the Highest."* John will *"go before the face of the Lord."* There is no doubt in the mind of Zacharias that Jesus is *"God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father."*

Our Christmas celebration is not complete, nor does it honour God, unless it be centred in the great historic announcement of Scripture: *"When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman."* We must prepare today for the greatest proclamation human ears have ever heard: *"Unto*

*you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* He who stands at our door, hoping to be received into our homes and into our hearts, is the eternal God, who made us and who in the person of Christ became our Brother when He was born of the virgin Mary. Be sure that you go to the door to welcome this heavenly Guest into your heart and into your home for the glad Christmas Holiday season.

### 3. Do We Appreciate His Gifts?

The gifts brought by the heavenly Visitor are the real gifts of the Christmas season. I wonder how much of Christmas would remain for people if suddenly there could be no more Christmas shopping, no decorations, and no gifts. For most people it would probably have lost all meaning.

But that need never be for us as long as we appreciate above everything else, the gifts of grace which our heavenly Visitor has prepared for us. Zacharias names them in beautiful imagery. Let us take a look at the priceless treasures Christ has brought into our individual lives and will bring again this Christmas season.

Firstly, that we are redeemed. Our text says, ***“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people.*** Jesus Christ, our Christmas Visitor brings redemption. We will never understand correctly God’s plan of salvation for us unless we understand this one phrase of our text.

God has worked out a redemption for His people. Bethlehem is only the gateway to Calvary. There the redemption He came to bring was paid in full — it was paid in blood. It was the only sufficient ransom for the sins of the whole world because the life of the Son of God was the price.

Jesus has rescued us from hell by sacrificing Himself for our sins on the cross. We, says Zacharias, were sitting ***“in darkness and in the shadow of death.”***<sup>1</sup> We were doomed. We had to be ***“delivered from the hand of our enemies,”***<sup>2</sup> so God ***“raised up a horn of salvation for us.”*** A horn is the symbol of strength and power.

Some people get very sentimental about ***“the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.”*** Sentimental thoughts are not enough for a genuine Christmas celebration. You must see yourself involved in your Saviour’s coming to earth. You must see

clearly that this gentle, loving Visitor at your door is Jesus who redeemed your sin-defiled soul from the terrors of hell, by exposing Himself to its fury on the cross.

Secondly, the floodgates of mercy are open. God did all this, says Zacharias, “*To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant.*” Because God sent Jesus as our Ransom, the floodgates of His mercy are now opened wide. John was born as the forerunner “*To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins.*”

God’s Christmas gift to us is not a vague, indefinite something, a lacy, frilly bit of Christmas sentiment. It is the knowledge of salvation. It is a firm conviction and a positive assurance because we are assured of the remission of our sins.

From this objective act of God, from the forgiveness of our sins, results our subjective knowledge that we are saved. Until a person knows that his sins have been forgiven, he cannot possibly know what real salvation is.

This remission of our sins for Jesus’ sake is the best Christmas gift we shall ever receive. It implies that “*as far as the east is from the west*” so far has God removed our sins from us. He has dropped them into the depths of the sea, and they will never again appear above the surface. He has blotted out the handwriting that was against us. Our debt is paid in full.

Those are the priceless gifts, the invaluable treasures that Jesus, our Christmas Visitor at our door wants to share with us. Will our hearts again be a clutter of earthly vanities this Christmas season? Or will we let them be shrines in which we preserve the treasures of God’s grace and mercy in Christ?

It all depends on how earthly-minded we are and how much of an influence the mercy of God in Christ exerts in our lives. Christmas truly “separates the men from the boys.” It lets us see whether we are still only spiritual babes playing with the toys of earth, or whether we have matured enough to realise that “*where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”<sup>3</sup>

#### **4. Do We Joyfully Serve?**

Because we appreciate these wonderful gifts we are to joyfully serve Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. So let us conclude this beautiful prayer of

Zacharias by also joining him the last verse of our text that God would *grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,*<sup>75</sup> *In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.*

The Christmas season ought to lift the lives of God's children to a very high level of loving service. But you know what usually happens. After the last Christmas carol has been sung, after the decorations are gone, there follows a noticeable slump in the life and activity of the church.

The post-Christmas attendance drops and an everyday attitude takes hold again. Whenever that happens, it is evident that Christ's coming was not understood by the people and that His gifts have not yet been fully appreciated.

May God grant that when the Christmas season is past your hearts will be so filled with gratitude that you will serve Jesus, as you have never served Him before, because He has enriched you with heavenly treasures. Then the Christmas Visitor will not have been at your door in vain. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:79

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:74

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6:21