

St. Luke 1:67-79 (selected verses)

Dear Friends in Christ,

In an article entitled "Nowhere Man" which was published in 2009, Anthony Esolen wrote:

"Behold,' says the Psalmist, 'I searched for the place of the wicked man, and it was no more.'

"...It is the second clause (*his place knows him no more*) that expresses the greater dread, of a death beyond death. It is the terrible prospect of a total and unalterable severance - expressed as a loss of place. How should it be, if one were wiped clean from the memory of earth and heaven and all that dwell therein? How should it be, not to cease to live, but to have one's few days of life delivered over - in their essence - to nothingness?" (Anthony Esolen, "Nowhere Man," Touchstone, April 2009, p. 19)

In Psalm 49, The Sons of Korah say of those weary of God and refusing refuge in Him: "Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell." (Ps. 49:14b) And this: "...his soul will go to the generations of his father, who will never again see light." (vs. 19) Jesus says, "...and cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 25:30)

This morning . . .

### ***LET US EVER WALK WITH JESUS***

#### ***I. Out of Darkness Into Light.***

Here are verses 67-70 and the first part of the 79th verse of our text:

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death..."

Our text falls within the context of the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah and Elizabeth; Elizabeth being the cousin of Mary. The statement, "...has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David" is a reference to Jesus. Everything Zechariah speaks directs us to the very purpose of Holy Scripture: Salvation through Jesus Christ. I want to focus on these words: "...sit in darkness and in the shadow of death..."

***Sit in darkness and the shadow of death.*** That was us, wasn't it? That's the world. The brightest day without Christ is dark and uncertain. Various assortments of people tell us that we need to look for the positive. Various assortments of people present themselves on the stage of the present moment promising that they, or others, by human wit and ingenuity, will create the perfect society. Is that it? If we accentuate the positive the negative will go away? Has it ever?? And exactly who is going to determine what is positive?? If we get the right people in the right place we'll realize our utopia? We're no closer to resolving what humanity is any more than what humanity was the day Noah and his family entered the Ark!

***Sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.*** In a sermon from 22 years ago I wrote, "We can't overcome greedy motives on any level that will make health care reasonable." I wrote, "We trade-off responsible, self-sacrificial parenting for personal gain, and hope against hope that somebody else will efficiently and effectively raise our children." Hence *Common Core* and a very sad University system. I wrote, "We have become a mean, unforgiving people." I should have included wasteful, murderous and vulgar beyond measure!

Our text says that “the horn of salvation (that’s Jesus) will “give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.” He is the One who will and does pull people from the obsession with a world that ends at 6 feet under - pulls them - such as us - into the light of God’s love, mercy, forgiveness and eternal life.

## II. The Means of Salvation.

In our text, Zechariah’s says:

And you, child, (a reference to his son, John) will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God...” (vss. 76-78)

The very purpose of John’s mission and, consequently, Christ’s mission to this world - the very purpose of Scripture was long ago abandoned by the liberal, theological left. Scriptures repetitive and emphatic teachings on man’s condition, death and eternal loss without Christ do not promote the human want and pursuit of a heaven on earth!

What we have seen and will continue to see are bound in the words, “you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins...”. *Salvation...in the forgiveness of their sins. Salvation. Sins.* Truths - words - very much in conflict with a culture and a world that see little to no need of God, much less forgiveness. The only real sin for most is that the Christian Bible and those who represent it would call all humanity (including themselves) sinful and, without a covering for that sin, bound to unending darkness and the fiery wrath of God.

John’s mission and, consequently, the very mission of Christ and His Church, is set in front of us with this most familiar moment:

The next day he (John) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!...I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” (Jn. 1:29-31)

***That he might be revealed...*** as what? *The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!* I stand before you sinful and guilty. I see my sin and feel its guilt. I might be able to convince some that I’m basically good, but only for awhile. The truth of the Word convicts me: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (I Jn. 1:8 & 10) The Word convicts me: “...we were by nature children of wrath.” (Eph. 2:3) I live with the truth of that every day. Every day! And so do you.

## III. Real Light and Peace.

Each day I live with the words of John: “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. Takes away your sin. My sin. And I live with the Scripture promise, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1) And I live with the fact that my life really isn’t my own, any more than yours is your own. I live with the fact that my walk with Jesus is to reflect His love, forgiveness, mercy and concern for others. For all...to be exact. I live with that and so do you.

The 79<sup>th</sup> verse of our text speaks comfort and eternal life to us. John’s mission - Christ’s mission - is “to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Well, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (Jn. 8:12) Friends, that’s the light of eternal life! It’s ours.

And peace? Well, it's the peace of knowing that God is no longer at war with us because of our sin. We are His children, and though we often fail, in Christ He loves and forgives.

A fair number of us here remember the Falkland Islands War between Great Britain and Argentina back in 1982. James S. Hewett wrote:

...A retired couple was alarmed by the threat of nuclear war so they undertook a serious study of all the inhabited places on the globe. Their goal was to determine where in the world would be the place to be least likely affected by a nuclear war. A place of ultimate security. They studied and traveled, traveled and studied. Finally they found *the place*. (You guessed it!) ...on Christmas they sent their pastor a card from their new home - in the Falkland Islands...their "paradise" was soon turned into a war zone...". (James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988, p. 402)

Look! Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." (Jn. 14:27) It's a bad world, friends. It's a bad time. And it isn't going to get better. If your major investments of money, living and time are with this world and what you think you will get out of it...well...you will loose. The truths from Scripture about which we're going to sing in the post sermon hymn say everything: "Let us ever walk with Jesus, Follow His example pure...Let us suffer here with Jesus, And with patience bear our cross...Let us gladly die with Jesus. Since by death He conquered death...Let us also live with Jesus. He has risen from the dead...".

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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*St. Luke 1:67-79 (selected verses):*

## ***“Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus”***

- I. Out of Darkness Into Light*
- II. The Means of Salvation.*
- III. Real Light and Peace.*

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