

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 1: 57-80

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Luke chapter 1, verses 57 to 80.

Verses 57–58: “Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.”

Giving birth to a child is a great joyful event, especially since Zechariah and Elizabeth were advanced in years when the child was born; it was an even greater joyful event. It caused their relatives, friends, and neighbors to come and rejoice with them.

Verse 59: “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.”

They still followed the Old Testament way: Israelite boys on the eighth day after birth were to be circumcised, and at the time of circumcision, he was to be named—named after his father, Zechariah. Among the Israelites, this was a very common custom: naming the son after the father's name or the name of ancestors from previous generations, to indicate the continuation of the family line.

Verse 60: “His mother answered and said, ‘No; he shall be called John.’”

Although Zechariah could not speak, he was together with Elizabeth; he should have made known to Elizabeth the vision he had seen, and Elizabeth clearly knew that his name was to be called John.

Verse 61: “But they said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.’”

Because generally speaking, naming should be done by the father, but now Zechariah could not speak. When their relatives and friends came to name him, his mother said he was to be called John, but there was no one among their relatives called by this name.

Verse 62-63: “So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, ‘His name is John.’ So they all marveled.”

He asked for a writing tablet because he could not speak and could only write. His name is John—decisively, with no room for negotiation: his name is John; they all marveled.

Verse 64: “Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.”

I believe that during the past period, Zechariah had ten months altogether when he could not speak: on one hand, God gave him much quiet time to repeatedly ponder; on the other hand, he should also have felt very restricted—God granted him such great grace, yet he had no way to speak it out.

At this time, when the child was born and on the eighth day for naming, he, according to the angel’s instruction, named him John, which means God’s grace. At

that moment, his tongue was immediately loosed; he could speak right away, and the first thing he spoke was praising God! What a beautiful thing this is—the mouth that could not speak for ten months, and the first words when he could speak were praising God.

This reminds me of a very famous hymn writer, Fanny Crosby; she was blind and wrote over ten thousand hymns in her lifetime. Therefore, someone said, you cannot see with your eyes yet can write so many beautiful hymns of praise; if your eyes could see, wouldn't you write even more beautiful and greater hymns? Her answer was very good. She said she praised God for making her blind, because when she finishes her journey on earth and opens her eyes in heaven, the first person she sees will be our dear Father; nothing is better than this. She was willing to be blind on earth, so that the first beautiful thing she could see would be our heavenly Father.

Verse 65-66: “Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. 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.”

Of course, later history proved that John was indeed extraordinary. He was born in a priestly family yet did not live in Jerusalem; he was a greatly powerful forerunner of Jesus.

Verse 67: “Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:”

Next, from verses 68 to 79, is Zechariah's prophetic poem and also Zechariah's hymn of praise. Zechariah's hymn, like his wife Elizabeth's hymn, both focus on the coming Messiah—Jesus Christ.

Verse 68: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people.”

Although at that time Israel was a subjugated nation, God still visited His people; God still redeemed them.

Verses 69–73: “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, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham.”

Zechariah here very skillfully weaves the meanings of his own name, his wife Elizabeth’s name, and the name of their born child John into this hymn of praise. God remembers His holy covenant—Zechariah means God remembers; Elizabeth means God’s oath, God’s sworn word—that is, the oath God swore to our father Abraham. Because God remembers His own oath, He grants His mercy and grants His grace; “showing him mercy”—showing mercy means John. In his hymn of praise, Zechariah very clearly tells us that the time has come; God will remember His oath; God will grant mercy and grace to us.

Verses 74–75: “To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.”

Zechariah was a descendant of priests; they very clearly knew that when God remembers His oath and performs salvation, delivering us who were captive and lost our position, it is so that we might serve Him without fear before Him, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life. God’s redemption has a purpose; God’s redemption is to restore people to God’s original intention for man when He created him.

In Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” God created man to represent God on earth to exercise dominion, but because of man’s sin, we lost our original position. Now through the grace He grants, through His Son Jesus Christ, He delivers us from the hand of enemies; so that we might serve our God without fear before Him, in holiness and righteousness. Zechariah also very clearly knew that his son John had a very special ministry.

Verses 76–77: “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, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins.”

God would use John the Baptist to open the chapter of the New Testament; this speaks that God’s grace begins to come; he would be the prophet of the Highest; he would be the one who goes before to prepare the way for the Lord. He would prepare the ways for the Lord, causing God’s people to know salvation by the remission of sins.

Verses 78–79: “Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Thank the Lord; Zechariah’s hymn is also a hymn of praise that every one of us who has received grace and salvation sings together today. Through the tender mercy of our God, He causes this gospel, like the dawn from on high, to visit us. And we who were originally sitting in darkness, sitting in the shadow of death, completely without hope, yet because of the coming of the gospel, He guides our feet into the way of peace. Zechariah’s poem written in the Spirit very clearly describes the entire salvation. Through salvation, we can be delivered from the dominion of the

devil; through salvation, we can live before God; through salvation, we can serve God in holiness and righteousness; through salvation, we can walk on a level path; through salvation, our sins can be forgiven. And this salvation is entirely from God's mercy; we sinners are utterly unworthy. Yet He is willing to let the gospel, like the morning sunlight, shine on us who sit in the valley of the shadow of death. Not only delivering us out but also guiding us into the way of peace. Therefore, the poem Zechariah wrote in the Spirit became the path that thousands upon thousands of Christians in later generations walked and also became the common hymn of praise for every Christian.

Verse 80: "So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel."

John had his special ministry; he was the forerunner who prepared the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. God specially used a godly priestly family, Zechariah and Elizabeth, so that John the Baptist could have a suitable background and receive suitable perfecting; he became strong in spirit and lived in the wilderness, preparing the way for Jesus Christ.

Let us pray together: Lord! Thank You; through Your servant Zechariah's hymn of praise, You speak our subjective experience toward You every day as Christians. Thank You for Your tender mercy; thank You that every day, like the morning sunlight, You anew shine on us and anew lead us. Every day we can continually turn to You, leading us out from all kinds of situations of the shadow of death; help us every day to walk on the way of peace. Remember that every day we have on earth is a day to serve You in holiness and righteousness. Bless my life today; I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.