

INSPIRED WORD
December 6, 2017

Teaching: Three Canticles of Christmas – (2) Canticle of Zachariah – Luke 1:67-79

EXHORTATION

Now we are called to praise the God who loves us so much, who shows us abundant mercy, and who calls us to be prophets of His love, prophets of His truth, prophets of His compassion.

SHARING / EXHORTATION

I feel the strong sense that I'm supposed to share this. This past week we were to meditate on the Magnificat: **(Luke 1:49)** *He who is mighty has done great things for me.* And the Lord reminded me of a great thing He did over a decade ago. We had a healing service here but it was very different than usual in the sense that the person who had come here told us to pray over each other. And for some reason, I'm not sure what was going on in my life at the time, but God felt very, very distant to me. And when the person who had come here to do the healing service said that, I said, "Oh, that's just great." So anyway, the Lord still had pity on me because a woman I did not know, had never seen before in my life, came over to me and said, "I have a message for you. I want you to know that God wants you to know that He said you bring joy to His heart and a smile to His face." If she had not been faithful to that prompting, I would have gone on being miserable. And as Chuck has told us so many times, even if it feels like it doesn't matter if I say it, somebody needs to hear it.

CONFIRMATION / SCRIPTURE

This is kind of confirming the messages we've heard and the sharings tonight and what we've just been saying about telling the story. From the prophet **Isaiah (52:7-10)**: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Listen, your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

SCRIPTURE

John 6:19-21: *Finally when they had rowed three or four miles, they sighted Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water. They were frightened, but he told them, "It is I; do not be afraid." They wanted to take him into the boat but suddenly it came aground on the shore they had been approaching.*

SHARING / SCRIPTURE

Psalm 91 is a special psalm to me. I gave an utterance in tongues in a church; I had just enlisted in the Army and I was just about to ship out, and I didn't know where I was going. I ended up going to Viet Nam. And I was scared, but Viet Nam was real hot and heavy at that time. And this does not rate towards anything that's been shared tonight but it's **Psalm 91**: *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (The interpretation came right back from one of the old white-haired saints of the church.) I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust." Truly, he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence; he shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you shall take refuge. His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that walks in darkness or of destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you nor shall any plague come near your dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they will bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample under foot. Because he has set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high because he has known my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him with long life. I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.* Father, we just thank You for the salvation of the Lord that has been shared here tonight. We just praise You and exalt You and magnify Your holy name. For You alone are worthy. Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb, worthy of honor and worthy of glory and worthy of all praise. For You alone are worthy, worthy in all Your ways, worthy in Your coming in and Your going out. We praise and exalt Your holy name.

PROPHECY

My beloved, let what you've just experienced now be a model for this season. See, the world likes for you to get involved in a lot of noise, a lot of busy-ness. The world wants for you to tune me out, even under the guise of welcoming me. But I tell you this, when you started this today, you started in silence, you started in quiet. You started by taking time to hear me in that still, small voice who dwells within you. This still, small voice brings to your attention, not only those things that are lovely about you, but the things that are not so lovely. Because in bringing those things forth, and recognizing those with that still, small voice, and bringing them out, I take them from you as an offering, as a sacrifice. Because in bringing those out, you're saying, "Lord, I don't want these to come between me and you." And when you do bring those out, they do not. But that only comes, my beloved, when you spend the time. This season, this Advent, is not just about Jesus who was or Jesus who is to come, but Jesus who is – here,

now, within and among you. And so, my beloved, what I tell you is to take this time, in the quiet, to hear my voice. Then, make the time to proclaim my words – loudly, boldly, proudly – and don't stop just because the season ends according to the world. The world only sees this as a day. I tell you, this is a life. This is a creation into which I was born, into which I brought you. And I say, not only listen, but what you hear in the darkness proclaim boldly in the light. I love you, my beloved.

SCRIPTURE

And as we have heard the last two weeks, as we listen, both Mary and Zachariah began their prayer with praise: Mary saying, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior" (**Luke 1:46**) and tonight, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them" (**Luke 1:68**).

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, as we bring in the breath of heaven, let it strengthen us to be Christ-bearers to the world. Let us hold all things in our hearts, honor them as Mary did, that they may truly take root and grow and give birth to Your glory in the world. There's a line in a song that says, "Holy Father, you have come and chosen me now to carry your Son." Lord, let us all be Christ-bearers, Christ-carriers to a world so desperately in need of Your love. Amen.

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

I get the sense that God is moving here, either in word or image or both, and if it is you who has that, I want you to raise your hand. I'm going to come to you. We need to hear it.

PROPHECY

My peace is an everlasting peace. Do not be fooled by the world's definition. My peace is for all time and for all seasons.

SHARING

There's one last part of what I was sharing. I was on the battlefield, crossing a roadway under fire. I was coming back and I heard something that sounded like a freight train coming through the air and I felt God's hand on my back pushing me down into the dirt just before it hit. And then there was enemy mortar going off and if I had been standing up, I would have been gone. But it was a fulfillment of that message that had been given to me in that church, and I don't know if that was what I was supposed to share or not.

PROPHECY

If you surrender yourself to me, I will take care of every single thing, every single person. Do not worry. Give your cares to me. I will take care of it.

SENSE / SHARING / EXHORTATION

I have a word that I received too and it kind of goes with all of these. While we were still sinners, God loved us already. When we were being born, God loved us already. Before we were born, He loved us intimately already. There's nothing that will ever get between that love and us. So why don't you open yourself? I teach little fourth graders and we were pondering about how big God's love is. And you know what definition we came up with? Sometimes the simple ones are the most profound ones. Here it comes. If you put the love of all moms in the whole wide world, all moms who ever lived, together, it would be tiny compared to God's love. I always love to receive it. Is it vulnerable? Yeah. But it's a grand exchange. We give so little and God gives so much. You don't need to give much; give what you can. This Advent is about giving love and receiving love. That's it.

SENSE / EXHORTATION

I have a sense that God wants some action on our part, and I got it after Mel's talk. And it is: Who are you going to tell about Jonathan? Who are you going to tell about Ray? Who are you going to tell and encourage that Cece got a job? He wants us to have that action of going out and telling these stories. And who are you going to tell that the wonders and signs and miracles are today?

EXHORTATION

That is love. God loves all those people too who have never heard of God. They are loved and they are loved through us. So let's make an action plan for the rest of Advent to do something, to share the incredible love we have been given. If you don't know what the action is, ask the Lord. There are plenty of actions.

PRAYER

Glory to you, Lord.