

**Activate Advent**  
**Activate Joy**  
**Luke 1:67-79**

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**Text Introduction:** This year at Christmas we are on a journey to Activate Advent. We have considered so far the themes of hope and peace. Today, we consider joy.

Our text today is Luke 1:67-79. You will recognize it as a song. Before we get to this song, I want to quickly say that there is a whole lot of singing in the opening chapters of the Gospel of Luke, and as well there should be. After 400 years of silence since the prophets, the news of the birth of the Savior is reason for rejoicing.

- Mary sings—“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” (Luke 1:46)
- Zechariah sings as we will read in a moment.
- The multitude of the heavenly host along with the angel sings: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors.”
- The shepherds glorified and praised God.
- Simeon praised God.
- Anna praised God.

Christmas—the celebration of the coming of Christ into our world ought to bring about unparalleled joy in our lives.

**Text:** <sup>67</sup> Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

<sup>68</sup> Praise the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because He has visited  
and provided redemption for His people.  
<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
in the house of His servant David,  
<sup>70</sup> just as He spoke by the mouth  
of His holy prophets in ancient times;  
<sup>71</sup> salvation from our enemies  
and from the clutches of those who hate us.  
<sup>72</sup> He has dealt mercifully with our fathers  
and remembered His holy covenant—  
<sup>73</sup> the oath that He swore to our father Abraham.  
He has given us the privilege,  
<sup>74</sup> since we have been rescued  
from our enemies’ clutches,  
to serve Him without fear  
<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness  
in His presence all our days.  
<sup>76</sup> And child, you will be called

a prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord  
to prepare His ways,  
<sup>77</sup> to give His people knowledge of salvation  
through the forgiveness of their sins.  
<sup>78</sup> Because of our God's merciful compassion,  
the Dawn from on high will visit us  
<sup>79</sup> to shine on those who live in darkness  
and the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.

**Introduction:** Isaac Watts wrote the words to the hymn, "Joy to the World." He penned the words not so much as a Christmas song, but part of a larger work that he titled, Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament. His words are inspired by Psalm 98. Indeed Watts' words reveal three aspects of Jesus' advent—that of His coming into our world as a baby, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, and looking forward to the return of Christ.

It is hard not to think of this hymn when thinking of the Joy of Christmas.

Zechariah illustrated that joy as well. His joy was personal. He had all but given up on having children. "Well along in years" and "his wife barren," (Luke 1:7) the news of a son was reason for joy. Then, he had been mute we presume for nine months, maybe even more, so there is joy that he is able to speak again. But none of this is the stated reason for his joy. His song has to do with Messiah. God is visiting His people through Messiah being born.

Why joy? The reason for their joy is the reason for our joy.

**Joy because . . .**

- **Salvation is provided.**

This song is filled with references to salvation: redemption, horn of salvation, salvation, mercifully, remembered, covenant, privilege, rescued from our enemies' clutches, knowledge of salvation, through the forgiveness of their sins, God's merciful compassion. All of these words and phrases are allusions to salvation.

The "what" of salvation is addressed.

The "why" of salvation is addressed.

This is God's idea.

Back in 2007, I preached a series of Christmas sermons called, "The Reasons that He came." He came to save sinners. He came to destroy the works of the Devil. He came to give His life as a ransom for many. This is why we activate joy.

- **Scripture is proven.**

I get this out of verse 70. How do we know the Bible is true? Part of the reason is because of Christmas.

The Bible validates itself with the accuracy of prophetic predictions.

1. God very clearly entered into a covenant with Abraham about the promise of land in a little strip of land now called Israel. Over the scores of years that have passed, there have been numerous threats to the security of that land and at times discipline from God involving that land, but the descendants of Abraham continue to occupy that land.
2. The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied (predicted) that invaders from the North would overtake the land of Israel and send many of the inhabitants of Israel into exile.
3. Another feature that dominates the prophets of the Old Testament is the correct prophesy of the Messiah—details of Jesus' birth, life, and death are all prophesied with accuracy centuries before Jesus' coming.
4. Finally, the Prophet Daniel prophesies the existence of four major kingdoms of the world that would follow from his lifetime to the time of Jesus.

We can celebrate at Christmas with joy that the Bible we hold in our hands is true. When the shepherds returned from visiting the baby lying in a manger, they are glorifying and praising God "for all that they had seen and heard, just as they had been told."

We can do the same.

- **There is strength for the present.**

I get this in verse 74 and again in verse 79. Indeed, we praise God for His salvation. By faith, our sins are forgiven and we have a future in heaven. But, we have strength for the present now. He has not left us alone. He is with us now. Remember, He is Immanuel, God with us. There is strength to serve Him, strength to be holy, strength to live in the age of darkness, and strength to guide us in peace day by day.

#### **So What?**

- **Sing with joy to the Lord.**
- **Show the joy of the Lord.**

Some will be convinced by a recitation of facts, but most will be moved by a fascination of our faith expressed in the joy they see in us.

- **Share the joy of the Lord.**