
LET HEAVEN AND NATURE SING

DELIVERANCE

Luke 1:68-79

In this Christmas season we are looking at some of the songs in the gospel of Luke, actual songs or prophetic songs.

Today we come to the song of Zechariah. Zechariah and Elizabeth were the parents of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the one who came in fulfillment of the prophecy of God to prepare the way for Jesus. He had a very important role, and Zechariah and Elizabeth have the honor and the privilege of being John the Baptist's parents. The circumstances around the birth of John the Baptist are rather unique. Elizabeth and Zechariah were old at the time of his birth. They were past childbearing age and Elizabeth was barren, so the gift of this child was the answer to a lifelong prayer and a supernatural blessing of God in their lives.

We want to pick up before the actual song of Zechariah and I want to start in verse 13. We are going to actually read some of the story leading up to Zechariah's song. If you will, please follow along as I begin in Luke 1, verse 13. Here is the setting. Zechariah is a priest. He is ministering, burning incense in the temple of God. This would have been a once in a lifetime opportunity for a priest. This was not something he had probably ever done before. He could have served his entire life as a priest and never had this opportunity. Here he is, alone, in the temple, and the angel Gabriel appears to him. We pick up with the angel speaking to him in verse 13.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."

Skipping forward to verse 57:

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him.

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,

that we should be saved from our enemies

and from the hand of all who hate us;

to show the mercy promised to our fathers

and to remember his holy covenant,

the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, 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 our days.

And you, child, 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,

whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high

to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

I would like to start this morning by telling you a little bit about a preacher named William Robinson. William Robinson preached in the 1700's, in the 1740's and following. He was here in the Colonies, here in America, and the story is told that on an occasion he went to Hanover, Virginia to preach a series of messages. He got just outside of where he was going; he was about 8 or 10 miles from the destination where he was going to preach. He went into a tavern and the owner of the tavern, the innkeeper was there. He was described as a shrewd, boisterous, and very profane man. There he was in the tavern with his profanity going nonstop. Finally, Robinson got a little bit tired of it, but in a very gentle way he asked the man to stop. The innkeeper said, "On what authority are you asking me to change my speech?" So Robinson said to the man, "Well, I'm a minister of the gospel." And the tavern owner said, "Well, you really don't look very much like a minister."

Now, Robinson had a nickname. It was not a nickname that you or I would probably want. He was called "One-Eyed Robinson." This was because as a child he had the chicken pox or small pox – some kind of pox – and he was scarred terribly and lost vision in one eye. So, this outspoken innkeeper came right back: "You don't look very much like a preacher." Then Robinson said to the man, "Listen, why don't you come hear me preach?" He responded, "Well, I'll tell you what -- I'll come hear you preach if you preach on the text that I give you." Robinson said, "Well, if it's not objectionable, I'll do it." So he said, "I want you to preach on this text from the Psalms: 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'"

No doubt, that was given to him to bring some derision because of his appearance, but Robinson agreed. He said, "Yes. Come hear me preach." So the man came and Robinson preached that we are all made in the image of God, but that we've sinned and we are in need of salvation, and we have not been faithful with the call of God and what God has made us to be, and that we are in trouble before God. We need salvation. We need deliverance." Standing there, hearing this message, the man came under conviction and was saved and became a member of the Church.

His story parallels in many ways the story of Zechariah. His deliverance came about because of circumstances that were really of his own making, if you will. This innkeeper talked himself into going to a worship service that he never intended to go to. The same thing happens with Zechariah with something similar wherein he, in his unbelief, asks Gabriel for a sign. He receives a sign, a sign that he would have never wanted, and God uses that very thing to bring about a deliverance in his own life. Then he breaks out in this prophetic song, which is about deliverance.

Let's just say this from the outset. We are celebrating today that Jesus Christ came to save us from our sin, to deliver us from our sin, that God has indeed made each one of us and we are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God,

and that God is our maker, God is our creator. There will be a day when we stand before God on the day of accounting and we are judged for our lives. We will be judged for our sin because God is a just and perfect judge and he will judge sin. But Jesus Christ came as the Son of God, living a perfect, spotless, sinless life so that he might be offered as a sacrifice to pay for our sin. He comes to deliver us from sin, from its hold on our lives, from the decay and corruption that it brings, and from the eternal judgment that awaits us without him.

Deliverance -- Zechariah celebrates this in song, but it's interesting because his life parallels, his experience in the birth of John the Baptist parallels that message of salvation.

We are going to break the message up into two parts:

- I. Preparation for Deliverance.
- II. Deliverance – The Experience Itself.

Let's start with the:

- I. Preparation.

I want to call our attention to the fact that any work of God requires a readiness to change. Any significant work of God requires a readiness to change, unless God chooses to bypass his ordinary measures.

Here is Zechariah. Here is Elizabeth. The text, if you go before the section that we read, makes a point of saying that they were righteous people. They were good, moral, upstanding people and they were living good, moral lives. And yet, God comes in and surprises them. Like many couples, they longed for a child and their natural desire was obviously a God-given thing. It was a good thing, yet they lived in a culture (maybe more than ours in our day) where the birth of a child gave significance and meaning to someone's life -- credibility. The absence of that child was often taken as an indication of God's displeasure or judgment. They are living with this lifelong desire, a lack of fulfillment in it, and with it, living in a culture that's applying pressure in that very area.

Then Gabriel shows up. Gabriel, the angel of God, shows up and says, "Hey! Your prayer has been answered!" And amazingly, Zechariah in that moment responds with unbelief. This brings us to our first point under the subject of Preparation and it is this:

1. Correction.

You will find that it's often the case that the first thing God does when he has something wonderful and great to do in our life is to bring a correction, a call to repentance, a call to change.

Zechariah asked for a sign and what does Gabriel say to him? He says, “Listen, I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and I was sent to speak to you. You want a sign? I’m going to give you a sign. Because you have spoken in unbelief, you will not speak again until these things are fulfilled.” He asked for a sign – he got a sign. It’s a correction. It is a rebuke, if you will. Can you see it? Can you see even in your own life how often the very first evidence of God coming in to move in your life is that he brings a correction? It’s amazing.

Do you ever have that sensation where you’re driving down the road and your car is just pulling? It’s pulling to the left, it’s pulling to the left, and your tires are not wearing evenly. So you take it in and they rotate the tires and they align your tires. This is what God does. He comes in and rotates your life because you need an adjustment. We need to be realigned.

Gabriel speaks to Zechariah. He says, “Do you have any idea who is talking to you? I stand in the presence of God and God sent me. Do you think it’s too difficult a thing for God to give you a child?” He brings this correction, this rebuke, if you will, for Zechariah’s unbelief. So we start with that: Correction, and we move to this second thing, which is Holiness.

2. Holiness.

I think in many ways this is the most important part of the Preparation. There is a call to holiness as God begins to signal to you: “You know what? Your thinking is off. Your emotions are not right. You are not trusting in God. Your whole interpretation of the circumstances of your life is off and I’m going to adjust you. What he does in that adjustment is call you to holiness.

I’m aware and I’m afraid that this is something that we’ve kind of lost an emphasis on. We don’t talk a lot about this even though it has a very strong biblical emphasis. 1 Peter 1:15-16: “But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Here’s what’s interesting. Peter says you are to be holy. God is holy. You are to be holy – in everything. It’s comprehensive. He brings this verse from Leviticus, from the Old Testament. For us to read this, we sometimes have this thinking, “Well, holiness – yeah, that’s an Old Testament thing. That’s something that God did in the Old Testament.” But Peter brings that Old Testament verse into the New Testament and emphasizes it for you and me, saying that God has called us to holiness. God is holy and he calls you to be holy, and that is what’s going on in Zechariah’s life. God comes to Zechariah and he calls him to holiness.

What do I mean by that? Well, here’s Zechariah. He has come to a place now of unbelief and his heart is hardened to the move of God. He is not sensitive to what God is doing at all. Gabriel comes to him and he is completely out of touch with what God wants to do. This messenger comes and says, “Listen, God has a plan. I have come from God! You may have

wanted a child and you may have had a dream for a child. I want you to forget everything you ever dreamed for your child, because this child belongs to God. This child will be a Nazirite. You won't cut his hair. He won't drink wine. He won't have strong drink. He's going to live in the wilderness. He is the forerunner for the Messiah. Zechariah, you may have had plans, but this is my purpose, and this is my purpose for your life. Maybe God didn't meet your expectations. Maybe it didn't happen on your timetable. Maybe it didn't happen in the way you thought it should happen, but I have a plan and I have a purpose. Zechariah, I am bringing a correction, a realignment to your life. You are holy. You belong to me. Your parenting will be for me and for my purpose."

This is what God does when he comes to move in our lives. He begins to adjust us to say, "This is what holiness is. Holiness means you've been set apart. You are no longer your own. You belong to God. You are a vessel." God says, "I'm going to take you and place you over here because you belong to me and you exist for my purpose and my plan and you are holy." That's the realignment that's taking place in Zechariah's life. John is going to be a Nazirite. He is going to live to fulfill the purposes of God.

So God brings a correction and he calls us to holiness. I'm amazed at how many times people will come to church for the first time. They come to a worship service and right off the bat, first thing, God brings a correction. Someone offends them. Someone tells them, "Hey, you're sitting in my seat. You can't sit there." Please don't do that if you have a seat. You know, we'll go six months without talking about money, but if money offends you, God will have us talk about it the first Sunday you get here. A correction. God is saying, "You're not thinking right." You are thinking, "I want God on this term, on this term, in this way, and when I'm ready, and this..." And God says, "No, no, no, no, no. Listen, if you want to come to me, I have something glorious for you. But I'm going to shake up, I'm going to rotate your life, because I'm going to call you to my purpose and my plan." That leads us to the third point, which is:

3. Repentance.

Repentance speaks of a complete change – a change of thinking, a change of behavior, a change of life. It all stems from a radical reorientation of your heart. Let me be clear. Repentance is not confession. Confession is important. It's a beginning place. You could say that confession comes early in the process, if you wanted to kind of map it out. In confession we come to God. We admit our sin. We receive forgiveness. We talked about this last week -- that humility is the door to God's power. We see we lack purity. We have sinned. We lack power to change ourselves. We lack position. We lack standing. We come in humility and we receive salvation as a gift. We confess our sin to receive forgiveness.

But repentance speaks of a complete reorientation, a change of life. I think, though it's not the topic of today's message (we will get to it in a week or two), it requires a certain grace. It is something that God graces us to do, though we give ourselves to it. I don't want to give you the impression for a minute that this is arrived at through human willpower. We

humble ourselves. “I lack the power to do this, Lord. Help me.” But then there is a total turning towards God and embracing holiness as the call of God.

This is what we see with Zechariah. In the beginning of the story he is described as a good, moral man. He is living a righteous life, and yet he is not living out God’s purpose and plan in faith. He doesn’t believe when Gabriel comes to him. And by the time we get to his song at the end of the chapter, he is a different man. He has been transformed. It probably helped him to not be able to speak for nine months and eight days. That’s the time period. Elizabeth conceives and there is this nine month period. In the third trimester, the last three months, Mary, Elizabeth’s cousin, comes to visit.

Can you imagine? There is Zechariah. Mary and Elizabeth are there. Mary is singing her own song. They are overcome with joy. He cannot speak. He can’t say a word for nine full months. Do you know what I think? I think that Zechariah embraced that with his whole heart. I think at some point during that correction he said, “You know what? This is good. This is right. I always spoke too much anyway. I always thought I was right. I was always pushing my opinion. I always had to tell others what I was thinking. I always had to get the last word in. I always had to: ‘You know, this was my experience. Oh, you did this? I did that.’ And you know what I’m just realizing? A lot of what I said – though it wasn’t bad in and of itself -- it just was too much. It was too much me. You know what? This is good.” In the future words of his son: “Less of me and more of Christ.” I think he came to a place where he completely embraced that and he was okay with not speaking. He comes to a place where God changes him. God transforms him.

The baby is born and still he can’t speak. Eight days later, it’s the naming ceremony. It’s the circumcision. Elizabeth is there and she says, “You know what? We are going to call him John.” Everyone comes and says, “What are you doing? You can’t call him John! There’s no one in your family named John! Call him after his dad. Call him Zechariah. That’s our tradition. He’s your namesake. Name him after someone in your family. Name him after the dad.” In fact, you could see the logic where they might say, “You know what? That’s our tradition. It doesn’t make sense for you to name him anything else. But even more so: Look at everything you’ve been through! Look at how long you’ve waited. Look at how old you are! Look at all the pain. We want to celebrate with you. This is your child. This is your legacy!”

Now Zechariah has something to say. He was like: “Give me something to write with.” And what does he write? “His name is John.” Do you see the call to holiness? It’s not about me. It’s not my name, my namesake, my legacy. This child has a future in God. This child has a plan and purpose that can only be fulfilled in God.

The very first words that Gabriel spoke to Zechariah – we read them in verse 13: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.” That’s the next thing he’ll speak after he speaks in unbelief. His response to that is this: “How shall I know this? I’m not so sure. You

know, I'm an old man. You know, Elizabeth is barren." As if to say, "I know God is God and God is good and God is powerful, but come on, really. I'm old."

Contrast that unbelief with what happens in his song. Let's go to the subject of "Deliverance – The Experience Itself," described in the song, verses 68 and following.

II. Deliverance – The Experience Itself.

Let me just give you a few observations. Now Zechariah is praising God and his theme is deliverance. I am suggesting to you that he has experienced it in his own life. As I set this up, I would like for a minute to call your attention to the fact that when the Spirit of God begins to move, he brings this correction and calls us to holiness and there is a reorientation of our lives. It's manifested in repentance, this reorientation. But God's Spirit moves across an entire group of people – people of all ages, people of all classes, people of all types.

But if you look at the subject of revival throughout the history of the Church, you find something remarkable. You find that when the Spirit of God moves, young people are especially impacted. You see that they rise up to this place of saying, "You know what? I have a call for my life. My life is holy unto the Lord." This is reorientation.

You know, we give ourselves to so many things that are in many ways harmless. There's the concert that you want to go to or the movie that you want to see. There's a trilogy and the third part is coming out and it starts at midnight and I want to go see it. Then all of a sudden you see young people saying, "You know what? I would love to see that, but if I go I'll be out late on this night and I really want to get to church early on Sunday. I want to prepare myself. I want to be ready. I want to serve. I want to meet with God.

All of a sudden, the whole subject matter of their conversations begins to change. It's not about finding the next craft beer or the next this or the next that. They want to get together and say, "Will someone pray with me? Will someone seek the Lord with me?" The next thing you know, young people are saying, "You know what? I want to go to a foreign place where no one has heard the gospel, where I can share what Jesus Christ has done in my life." God begins to move and reorient us.

We understand that there's a place in theology to say we can enjoy life unto the Lord. That's wonderful, and understanding holiness protects us from legalism. It's not about sharpening the rules so that we get all the "don'ts" and all the things that are forbidden. That's not a proper understanding of holiness. Holiness is understanding that I am the possession of God and God is doing something wonderful to save people from an eternity without him. As great as this may be, and maybe I'll do this later, I'm driven by the mercy of God to do this. May God move in our midst.

William Robinson was born in England, and he was slated to receive a large inheritance from his dad and from his aunt. So One-Eyed Robinson goes to London as a young man and just makes horrible decisions. He begins to accumulate debt, the wrong kind of debt, and he gets in big trouble. His aunt is there in London and she will not bail him out. He's afraid to go back to his father, so he says to his aunt, "Will you give me a little bit of money so I can go to America? So I can go to the Colonies? And I'll get a fresh start." She reluctantly says, "Yeah, I'll be glad to get you out of London." She gives him a little bit of money and he goes. And somewhere in that voyage, before arriving in America, he goes through a transformation.

You see, it's the same pattern. It's the tavern keeper bragging, and asking, "Who gives you the right? I'll come hear you preach if you preach out of a text that I give you," and he gives him a smart aleck text. Next thing you know, he is standing there listening and he gets saved. It's Zechariah saying, "I don't believe you. Give me a sign." "Okay, you want a sign? You won't speak." Then God uses those nine months to transform his life.

Well, here is William Robinson squandering an inheritance before he ever gets it, comes to America, and he begins to teach school. God gets ahold of his life and he becomes a pastor. He preached four times in Hanover, Virginia, in the town with that little tavern. That was the whole extent of his ministry in that town. The town was spiritually shriveling up. People had left the organized church. And in Virginia in the 1740's it was largely the National Church, the Anglican Church, and this particular sector was dying spiritually. So people had begun to leave the church there. They went to what was called Reading Rooms. They would go to places where people would gather and take Puritan sermons from 100 years earlier and just read those sermons, read Bunyan or Baxter or someone else. It's bad when people don't come to hear you preach. They would just rather go read a book together, but that's the condition of the church.

So William Robinson shows up and begins to preach. And God begins to move and the hearts of the people are awakened. God does this dramatic work in Hanover in four days. The night before Robinson leaves, the people take up an offering. They want to bless him because they've been touched by God. As he is getting on his horse to leave, they come with this extraordinarily large offering for what he has done. They say, "Here." Remember the pre-converted Robinson? He says, "You know what? I don't preach for money. No. Keep it. I don't want it." They argue. They go back and forth. He says, "No, no, no, no" -- something you've never heard a preacher do, I'm sure -- refuse money. But he refused it.

So then they sneak it into his saddlebag. They find the guy rooming with him and say, "Hey, put it in his saddlebag." The next day he picks up his saddlebag: "Wow! This thing has gotten heavy." He opens it and says, "Come on." He calls everyone together and says, "Listen, I understand that your heart, your desire is to bless me, but I want to tell you that I don't need this. But I know a young man who is impoverished. The Spirit of God has moved on his life and he feels a call

into ministry. I'm going to give it to him. He gives it to a man named Samuel Davies, who became one of the greatest preachers in the 1700's. He eventually became the president of Princeton.

Here's what's remarkable about that story. You see this transformation, this realignment, this call to holiness. "I don't live for that anymore. Now that is used to serve the purposes of God. The Spirit of God is moving. In particular, he is calling young people, so I'm going to invest in that." He gives it to Samuel Davies. You know where Samuel Davies ends up in five years? Hanover. He becomes the pastor back in the town that filled Robinson's saddlebags with money. Isn't God amazing? That's amazing! Doesn't that stir you to say, "You know, I want to be a part of that. I want to be a part of the move of God where he is capturing the hearts of people of all ages so that people might be saved"?

So here we are. The first point under "Deliverance – the Experience Itself" is:

1. Deliverance is better than anything you've imagined.

If you look at the text, verses 68 and 69, he breaks out into praise. He begins to just praise God. "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..."

I have given you three examples of how God delivers us. You may be here today and lost. By lost, I mean your sin is not forgiven. You do not know Jesus Christ. Your eternity is in jeopardy. And I have good news for you: Jesus wants to save you. He wants to deliver you from your sin and save you. Trust in him today. Turn from living your own life and tell God you want to live for him. Receive the gift of forgiveness, the gift of salvation, and Jesus will come and make all things new. Okay? There are a number of you where that would be the application for you.

But there are a number of us here where that has happened in your life. You are a believer, and yet God wants to bring a deliverance to you today. Here's what's amazing about how this works. It's always so much better than we thought it would be. The reason is we don't know we need deliverance. We are naïve to how lost we are and to how misaligned our hearts are until God comes in and brings a correction and we are like, "Oh wow – where did that come from?" We are awakened to what it is to live a life that's consumed with the purposes of God. It's better. And that's what you hear in Zechariah. Nine months and eight days of praise comes out in one song. He is full of God.

2. Once you are delivered, you are now more excited about the purposes of God than your own plans.

In the heart of the prophetic song, verses 69 through 75, Zechariah is rehearsing all that God has done. He talks about Israel. He talks about the people of God. He talks about the prophets. He talks about David. He talks about Abraham. He talks about God's covenant with his people. You see, he is now aligned with the purposes of God and he's excited.

Jesus is coming into the world and John is going to prepare the way. Salvation has arrived. This is what deliverance looks like: “I’ve got something greater to live for and it’s better than anything I ever imagined.

3. Your delight in God brings a brand new depth of emotion, and your delight is fueled by mercy.

Mercy is such a descriptive word of what happens to us when God saves us, because we are in this danger and we don’t even know it. We are often quite content in our lost state until God disrupts us. And we know when we get on the other side of that act of deliverance we know it was God’s mercy, because if God had not disrupted my life, I would have just kept on going. But God sent this person into my life, or I heard this, or this happened. It is mercy. And now my delight is fueled, the flame is fueled by the mercy of God.

4. You grow increasingly bold in fearless holiness.

Verses 74 and 75: “...that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” This theme of belonging to God, living for his purposes, is now accentuated in the song. Now I am free to serve God without fear. We see that in Zechariah’s life. To say it another way, we are jealous to keep everything out of our lives that’s going to hinder or delay the purpose of God.

I’m moving quickly here. Stay with me.

5. You are eager to give your children over to the purposes of God.

And really, along with them, every blessing that God has ever given you, verses 76 and 77. Now, after he has talked about being part of the plan of God, he says this: “And you, child, 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...” Something powerful happens when God begins to move in our hearts. We not only give ourselves to God, but we give our children to God. We say, “God, what an honor it would be if you call one of my children, all of my children – whatever vocation, whatever capacity, but oh that they would serve you and live for your purpose wherever that takes them.

John Rodgers was the son of Irish immigrants. He was born in Boston and moved to Philadelphia when he was a child. He also lived in the 1700’s. George Whitefield came to town in Philadelphia in the Great Awakening of 1740-1742. Little John Rodgers was in grade school and he was tasked with holding the lantern on the steps of the courthouse in Philadelphia while George Whitefield preached. If you know anything about George Whitefield, he preached to masses of people, open air, no microphone of course. Just an amazing, extraordinary, gifted man, but in a time of revival where the Spirit of God was moving so powerfully. So, here is little John Rodgers – a little boy holding a lantern. As Whitefield

preaches, he's overcome with conviction and the substance of what Whitefield is preaching. He forgets his job and drops the lantern and it shatters. And he gets saved.

Years later, John Rodgers is a pastor in the colonies and Whitefield comes through on a preaching tour. He is talking to John Rodgers and Rodgers says to him, "Mr. Whitefield, do you remember a time when you were preaching in Philadelphia on the steps of the courthouse, and a little boy was holding a lantern and dropped the lantern?" Whitefield interrupts him and says, "Yes! I remember that. And do you know, I would give anything to know what became of that little boy." So Rodgers says, "Well, I am that boy and I'm pastoring today." So Whitefield breaks down in emotion and confides in Rodgers. He says, "You know, on this preaching tour, you are the fourteenth man that I have met that is in ministry who was saved under my preaching."

It wasn't about him. It wasn't about his preaching. It illustrates this point: The Spirit of God was powerfully moving, and a whole generation, a new generation was stepping forward to say, "We will go. We will go to serve God." God brought about an amazing work of the Spirit of God here in our country yet to be.

So, you're eager. There is an understanding that there is no greater way to participate in the purposes of God than to give over that which God has blessed us with.

One or two more.

6. You are driven by God's tender mercy to see others saved.

Verses 78 and 79: "...because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." There is a shadow. Death is standing before us, casting a shadow. It comes for all of us. We are living in darkness. We are unaware of the judgment that awaits. And Jesus comes, brighter than the sun, showing us mercy, bringing salvation, and that experience of mercy propels us out into the world to share the message of God's salvation.

#7 of what the experience looks like:

7. You are singing.

Song is simply the best way to express your joy and to fulfill your purpose. You are full of the Holy Spirit. Let me just give you this verse. Peter brings together several of our themes that we are talking about this morning. 1 Peter 2:9-10: "But you are a chosen race" (speaking to Christians, speaking to the Church) "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous

light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

You see, you receive the mercy of God. God comes in. He delivers me. He saves me. I wasn't even aware that I really needed deliverance until I got deliverance. Then I was like, “Wow, I was so lost, so blind, so steeped in death, and God gloriously disrupted me, corrected me, called me to holiness, brought me to a place of repentance, delivered me, filled my heart with song. Now I'm not my own. I'm part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. I am his possession, to proclaim his excellencies.” It's glorious what God delivers us to.

I want to ask you bow your heads if you would, please. I want to ask you to bow your head and to prepare your heart to respond to this message of deliverance.