



The Sunrise Shall Visit Us

Luke 1:67-79

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I don't know about y'all, but I love to get baby announcements – all sorts of them. I love the creative ones, the themed ones, the normal basic ones. I love what they represent – new life, new hopes, new dreams, answered prayer, gracious mercy from God. They are a great blessing to my soul.

Of course they take all kinds of forms – giving out cigars or the Baptist bubble gum cigars, pictures, postcards, Facebook announcement, Instagram, phone call. Back when we were having kids, we did the whole postcard announcement thing – no Instagram or Facebook back then and the preacher can't really give out cigars – so we, or rather, Gretch did creative announcements for Sam and Jake and John. Then we had Cami and because she was a girl, it was at a whole new level. But then Gabe came along, and being number five and the fourth boy, the announcement was more of a – “Hey, we had another kid and yes, we know what causes it.”

But the common part of the birth announcement is that it's about the child that is born, right? And I bring that up, because the text that we are reading today is the announcement, if you will, of the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah and Elizabeth. But it's different from what we are used to or what we might expect. Rather than focusing on John, Zechariah's announcement is more about God and His grace, more about Jesus Christ, and then about John. Zechariah saw something more in this birth of his son, something grander, something far more earth shaking. With the birth of his son, John, whose name means “God is gracious,” Zechariah saw the first fingers of the rays of the sunrise that that was coming to dispel the spiritual darkness over the world. The birth of his son could only mean one thing -- **The Messiah is on the way! The long wait is over! God is visiting his people!**

Zechariah's song reveals the hope of the true people of God in Israel on the eve of Messiah's birth. For hundreds of years the people of God had been waiting for Messiah to come. At long last God was visiting his people. At long last God has kept his promise. Go back with me to verse 5 and let's get the backstory. And again, there is no outline this morning – I want us to focus on the story, put ourselves, as much as we can, in the moment.

“In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.” (Luke 1:5–7, ESV) these first few verse introduce us to Zechariah and his wife. He is a priest who serves in the Temple in Jerusalem. He is a descendant of the priestly line and so is his wife. And Luke gives them a great commendation here -- ***And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.*** That is not to say that they were sinless, but the point is that they were devout, faithful, obedient to God. They were not corrupted by the legalism and false religion of the Pharisees, for instance, but they were devout and, by faith, hoping in the promises of God. They were faithful people, but Luke also points out this fact – they were old and childless. Don't miss that. They had not been given a child by God and Luke mentions it to let us know that it was a source of pain and regret. They had not been, to this point, blessed with a child from God. They didn't know why and it was a source of sorrow, it had been a matter of anguished prayer for them, but it did not prevent them from being faithful and devout in their worship and service of the Lord. But all that was about to change.

“Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.” (Luke 1:8–10, ESV) Zechariah was on the priestly rotation for service in the Temple, and it just so happened that his time to enter the Temple and offer incense and prayer to God on behalf of the people had come. So here is Zechariah, offering incense and prayer to God in the Temple, with people gathered in the courtyard outside, when something amazing and unique and glorious happens.

“And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.” (Luke 1:11–12,

ESV) Right on! This is not normal, not a common occurrence. Zechariah is terrified. **“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.””** (Luke 1:13–17, ESV) This is amazing and when I look at this, I have to ask myself what it was that Zechariah was praying for. Probably, by this time, Zechariah was not praying to have a child – in fact, his response indicates that he wasn’t. He didn’t think it possible. So I have to think that the focus of his prayers was that God would visit His people, that He would send His deliverer, that He would keep His promises, found all throughout the OT, to redeem and rescue His people. And in an amazing way, God was going to answer his prayers prayed long ago for a son and his prayers prayed even now for a deliverer, for the Messiah in one connected way, with one great answer to prayer. To say that Zechariah was taken aback would be an understatement. In fact, he responds in disbelief.

“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.”” (Luke 1:18–20, ESV) There is both a rebuke in Gabriel’s response and an incredible grace – see that with me. There is a rebuke, a judgment of sorts. Because of His unbelief, Zechariah is struck mute, and I also believe that he was struck deaf as well – because nine months later, verse 62 tells us that the people communicated with him with signs instead of speech. He is rendered unable to speak or to proclaim, at least for the moment, the grace of God that was coming to pass – unable to speak of God’s promises being fulfilled, unable to tell everyone what just happened. **“And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.”** (Luke 1:21–23, ESV)

So there is a judgment, a rebuke here, but there is also a grace. And let me tell you why I say that. Zechariah had nine months of silence, nine months of a God-imposed solitude, to pray, to ponder, to pour over the OT Scriptures, to consider all that the angel has said to him –

what it meant, the majesty of the moment, the promise of the future, the grace and the tender mercy of God. In the silence of those days, while he could not communicate with his wife and friends, Zechariah could commune with God. The understanding of his heart was opened to grasp the cosmic significance of what was taking place. That was a grace from God, grace in the midst of rebuke. The silence allowed Zechariah to grasp the breathtaking, eternal significance of God's work in history in those very days. That silence was a blessing – something that is in short supply in our days. The modern hum of our lives, the hum of the Christmas season, sort of wars against that. And I would say to you that if we are not intentional about seeking our silence in our own lives, finding time to think deeply about God's truths, without the background noise of our busy lives, it is very unlikely that we will think deeply or meaningfully about the works and the ways of God. We have to work hard at that – I have to – but God gave that gift to Zechariah, couched in a rebuke that became a blessing.

Fast forward nine months, and we read, starting in 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.”*** (Luke 1:57–66, **ESV**) Nine months have passed, the time for Elizabeth to give birth has arrived, and she delivers a son whom she names John. Of course, everyone has an opinion about what she should name her son and so they make signs asking Zechariah what he thinks. And he writes the words – His name is John, his name is “God is gracious.” He doesn't have an option – the child has already been named by God. Immediately, following this act of faith by Zechariah, the declaration of his son's name, God restores to Zechariah, his speech and his hearing, and he uses his restored faculties to bless God.

And I want you to be aware of something before we look at these words in depth, Zechariah is not self-focused at all. Here is the fulfillment to his prayer, this son that he is holding in his arms, and his message is not, “I have a son! Aren't I a blessed man!” His words are not even

primarily about his son. They are about God and His great redemption, about God and His coming to save His people, about God and the coming of His redeemer. They are God-exalting and God-focused words.

In fact, Zechariah sees that the fulfillment of his longing for a son, this birth of John, is a part of something bigger, something more glorious, something grander that is going on. He wants the people, he wants us to know, that the birth of John, prophet that he will become, is about something far bigger than him having a son in a miraculous way – it's about God's redeeming work, God's plan of salvation. John's life is about something far bigger. It's true, to a different degree, of all of our lives. We have to see our own lives, our work, roles and responsibilities, our callings, our families are part of something bigger than ourselves. And that something bigger is God's purposes. Our lives are to be about the kingdom of God, the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and bearing witness to Him in all we do, in every arena of our lives. There's a God-centeredness about Zechariah's song here that teaches us the kind of God-centered lives that we're to live. And what a song it is. Nine months earlier Zechariah could not believe his wife would have a child. Now, filled with the Holy Spirit, he is so confident of God's redeeming work in the coming Messiah, of whom his son will be the forerunner, that he puts it in the past tense, in the prophetic Aorist. Like we talked about last week with Mary. Just listen to these words. In listening to them, it becomes clear that there is no way that Zechariah could have known the fullness of all that the Spirit of God inspired him to say:

“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” (Luke 1:67–68, ESV)

Zechariah extols God that He has visited us with the expressed purpose of saving His people, of acting toward us in grace. He saw our helpless condition, took pity on us, and came down to meet colossal need. That is what this word “visit” means – to come to help – to come save us. God has come in Jesus Christ, in Immanuel. That was the testimony of the angel to Joseph, in Matthew 1: ***“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).” (Matthew 1:21–23, ESV)***

Just consider what it means that Christ has visited us, that He is the Immanuel – God with us. God came near, not with a flash of lightning, roar of thunder, fire and smoke, the quaking of

the earth like at MT Sinai, but as a baby. God came near, and made his dwelling place with us. The creator, sustainer and goal of all creation, comes to us, condescends to us. How astounding that the Holy, the Almighty, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent God, so desires to save sinners, to deliver for Himself from sin a people to enjoy His glory forever, that He was willing to take on flesh to make that happen. And it was the desire of His heart, His plan, His purpose that brought it to pass. God is the initiator - not you or me.

Beloved, to us, there should be no greater sound to our ears, than this, that God has visited us, not in open majesty as befits Him as King over the universe, but in the form of a baby, a child, a man, our Savior. In Jesus divine omnipotence moved in a human arm and was unleashed by a human word; In Jesus divine wisdom was cradled in a human brain; In Jesus divine love coursed through a human heart; In Jesus divine compassion was felt in human guts; In Jesus divine grace poured forth from human lips.

But Jesus went beyond just being "with" us. He took our place. Paul makes this statement about Jesus, ***“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”*** (2 Corinthians 8:9, ESV) He stripped himself of all privilege, made Himself no reputation; He became poor for our sakes. He came to pour himself out upon the cross. He extinguished the wrath of God against all of the sins – past, present, and future – that all who trust in Him as Savior and Lord would ever commit.

God did not send us an angel, did not send us a message, but He sent us His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and clothed Him in human flesh that He might suffer for us, redeem us, save us and deliver us from our sin, being the manifest expression of the depth of God’s love and the greatness of His grace. What grace and what power. That’s what Zechariah speaks of when he tells us in verse 69:

“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,” (Luke 1:69–70, ESV) Zechariah describes Jesus as the “horn of salvation” raised up by God – that is, a mighty and glorious and powerful Savior. Those are the very words that are used to describe Father God in Psalm 18:2: **The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take**

refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Psa 18:2) To the Israelites, horns were well known emblems of strength, glory, and power – displayed in horned animals. Picturing this, I always think of a Texas Longhorn. I grew up in a farming town in northern PA and we had our share of bulls, but I never saw a bull until I lived in Texas. Those things are just amazing and intimidating. The image here is of a mighty bull with big, curving horns. It lowers its head at the approach of a lion or wolf and points those long, gleaming horns at the enemy. One stab or toss of those horns is all that it needs to defend itself. It is describing a power or mighty weapon. Zechariah's point is that in the same way as all the power and strength of the bull is concentrated in its horns, so all the redeeming and saving power of God is centered in the Messiah. He is the only means of salvation and the only Savior. He is the horn, the power, the weapon of our salvation. This is a deliverance that goes far beyond what the contemporaries of Zechariah were looking for. They were looking for a political salvation, a material salvation, but they were short sighted and did not rightly comprehend the Kingdom that Christ came to bring or the victory that He came to win.

He is the horn who is raised up from the line of David, the great King in Israel – the man after God's own heart. Zechariah declares Jesus to be the eternal fulfillment of the promise of God to David. When David wanted to build the temple of the Lord, God restrained him from doing it. But at the same time, God gave David a promise, a beautiful promise. God promised to make David's name great. God promised a place and rest and security for His people Israel. God promised David and his seed a throne and a kingdom that will endure forever. God promised a future king from David's line when He said to him: ***“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”*** (2 Samuel 7:12–16, ESV)

Certainly this was fulfilled in a temporal sense in Solomon, but the nation of Israel split at his death and eventually the kingdom was crushed and the line of David no longer was on the throne. But Zechariah's point is that God's promise to establish the throne of David was an eternal one, not extinguished in Solomon and his foolish sons, but fulfilled in Christ – King from eternity but in time the descendant of David, who in even a much greater sense is

Jesus truly the man, the God-man, after God's own heart. He is the One who would truly build the house of God.

And all of this, Zechariah says, was revealed in the prophets. The prophets had predicted the coming of the Offspring of David – the One who would come in the line of David and be an even greater King, Who would destroy all of His enemies and bring salvation to His people. None of them, with the possible exception of Isaiah told the entire story, but they told it collectively, each speaking to a certain aspect of Christ's life. They spoke for God with one mouth – God has been one author telling one story across all of the ages. All of the prophets have spoken with one voice – God's voice.

We read all sorts of prophecies in the OT regarding Christ. In Daniel Chapter 2 that He would be born specifically during the time of the Roman empire; in Isaiah 11 that He would be born into the family line of King David; in Isaiah 7 that He would be born to a virgin; in Isaiah 9 that His family would come from Galilee; but, In Micah 5, that He would be born in Bethlehem.

The prophecies described not only the unique circumstances of Jesus' conception and his birth, they described His life. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 42: ***“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: “I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”*** (Isaiah 42:1–7, ESV)

The prophets also described in very particular terms the unique circumstances of his death: Zechariah 9 that He would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey; Psalm 69 that He would be betrayed; Zechariah 11 that His betrayal would be for thirty pieces of silver; Zechariah 12 that He would suffer a painful death in which his body would be pierced; Psalm 22 that He would

be mocked as He died and that He would cry out to God asking God why He had been forsaken. And in Isaiah 53 that He would be the suffering servant, crushed by God for the penalty of our iniquities so that He would deliver His people.

We're told in Psalm 16 that he would rise again from the dead; And in Daniel 7 and Zechariah 12 that one day He will come again on the clouds for all to see, and that when He comes He will bring to a close all of human history as we know it. He is exactly who and what we have been waiting for, whether we know it or not. God has given this warrior of salvation for this reason, Zechariah says:

“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.” (Luke 1:72–75, ESV)

All of this is in keeping with the great promise God made to Abraham. The promise that predates all the psalms, all the prophets, all the kings. God promised to make Abraham great, to make of him a great nation, to bless all peoples on earth through him – **By myself I have sworn**, God says, **I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice. (Gen 22:17-18)** That offspring, that offspring is Christ.

And he comes to crush our enemies. Of course, Zechariah's contemporaries thought in terms of Rome and political oppressors, but we know the real focus is cosmic and spiritual. Satan is a very real enemy. ***“Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8, ESV)*** Because of Satan, Sin is a very real enemy. The wages of sin is death. Because of sin, death is a very real enemy. All these, Christ overcame.

The Son of God overcame the ravages of sin in very visible ways. He comes and acts and illnesses depart immediately, blind eyes see, the deaf hear, withered arms are restored, the

lame leap and dance. All visible pictures of Christ' power over sin and its effects on the human soul. He demonstrates power over what we call nature. He faces the power of the winds and storms and the threatening waves of tempestuous Galilee and Christ says, "Peace! Be still," and the storm is no more. Think of the legion of demons, that when Christ approaches, shriek with terror and flee. Consider the power of death over Lazarus, or over the son of the widow of Nain. In the presence of life, death has no power. The Lord of life comes and delivers the dead from the grave. In all of this, **"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."** (1 John 3:8, ESV) To destroy our greatest enemy.

John Piper writes of our "horn of salvation," these words: **Satan may be a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, but none of those who take refuge in Christ, the horn of our salvation, can he destroy. If I were an artist, I would paint for my home a special Christmas painting this year and hang it on the wall near the manger scene. It would be one of those big oil canvasses. The scene would be of a distant hill at dawn. The sun is about to rise behind the hill and the rays shoot up and out of the picture. And all alone, silhouetted on the hill in the center of the picture, very dark, is a magnificent wild ox standing with his back seven feet tall and the crown of his head nine feet tall. On both sides of his head there is a horn curving out and up six feet long and twelve inches thick at the base. He stands there sovereign and serene, facing the southern sky with his massive neck slightly cocked, and impaled at the end of his right horn hangs a huge lion, dead. I'd buy that picture.**

But there is even more -- Zechariah celebrates that the purpose of deliverance, the purpose of redemption is service or better yet *worship*. God saves us, He redeems us for His glory. Jesus, the promised mighty rescuer, has been sent to set us free from slavery to sin, so that we can serve God without fear, not just in an occasional worship service or ministry opportunity, but so that we can serve Our Maker with every waking moment of every day for the whole of our lives. With His pierced hands and shed blood and the smiling countenance of His risen face, Jesus calls us to Him that we who served Satan and sin would be liberated to serve another master, a gracious master -- our God, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Father in Heaven. He has come so that we who feared death might have life forever. He has come so that we who lived in fear of punishment might be so completely forgiven that we would never fear punishment again. He has come so that we who once did not please God might be pleasing to him forever. He has come so that we who were unholy might be made holy. He has come so that we who were unrighteousness might be made righteous, by changing us, by His grace, through His word and His Spirit, in

deep, lasting ways. In Christ, God calls us to serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, and to worship Him.

But what of John? What is his role in this divine drama? Zechariah tells us: **“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,”** (Luke 1:76–77, ESV) What was John’s calling? To be a herald, to go before the Messiah, to prepare the way for Him and arouse the nation to seriousness about eternal things. To Him was given the role of faithful, and strong and hard preaching which would make the hearts of the people soft and receptive.

This strong ministry was given to John, Zechariah says, **“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.”** (Luke 1:78–79, ESV) In a great summation, Zechariah captures the heart of Christ’s coming, the motivation of coming, and the reason for John’s birth and the ministry he would perform – the tender mercy of God. Our salvation is rooted in the tender mercies of God and to anyone who understands their natural condition before God apart from Christ, those are beautiful words. If God dealt with us solely on the ground of His justice, solely on the grounds of His righteousness and holiness, He could not forgive us. But he deals with us in mercy, not by ignoring our sin but by putting it away in Christ, by laying it on Him and exhausting His wrath against our sin in Him so that He can deal with us in mercy, tender mercy.

That tender mercy is like the sunrise of a new day. The picture is of a caravan travelling through the desert. It gets off track, lost in the desert, and the blackness of night descends. There are no moon or stars to light the path. Sitting there in the darkness, there is real fear – fear of exposure, fear of wild animals – lions prowl, wolves howl, and the fear of death. There in the dark, they are helpless. But just when things are the most desperate, suddenly a bright star, a sun like no other, an unprecedented astronomical visitation appears on the horizon and lights up the desert, illuminating the path of safety and rescue, the very road to life itself. We are that caravan and Jesus is that sun.

The last prophecy of the OT was the prophecy of Malachi. In Malachi 4:2 we read: **But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. (Mal 4:2)** That was the last prophecy of the OT and for 400 years afterward there was silence. But now, the silence was broken. In Christ, the sunrise from on high has come: He has come so that we who were lost in the darkness and death of sin might be lifted up into the light of God's glorious grace. He has come so that so that we who were in the darkness of sin might see the light of the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ.

And what does this require of us? I'll close with these words from Charles Spurgeon: **What does the Gospel ask of us? It certainly asks nothing of us but what it gives to us. It never asks of any man a sum of money in order that he may redeem his soul with gold... Neither does the Lord ask of us any severe penances and punishments in order to make us acceptable to Him. He does not require you to put your bodies to torture, or to pass through a long series of outward and visible mortification of the flesh. You may trust Christ while you are sitting in your pew—and if you do so, you shall be at once forgiven and accepted!**

No great depth of learning is asked as a condition of salvation. In order to be a Christian, one need not be a philosopher. Do you know yourself to be a sinner—guilty, lost, condemned—and Christ to be a Savior? Do you trust Christ to be your Savior? Then you are saved, however ignorant you may be about other matters! Nor is any great measure of spiritual depression asked as a qualification for coming to Christ. I know that some preachers seem to teach that you must not come to Christ till you have first been to the devil—I mean that you must not believe that Christ is able and willing to save you until you have been, as it were, right up to Hell's gates in terror of conscience and awful depression of spirits! Jesus Christ asks not anything like this of you—but if you truly repent and forsake your sins, give up the evils which are destroying you and put your trust in the griefs and pains which He endured upon the Cross, you are saved!

Nor does the Gospel even ask a great amount of faith of you. To be saved does not require Abraham's faith, nor the faith of Paul or Peter. It requires a like precious faith—faith similar in substance and in essence, but not in degree. If you can but touch the hem of Christ's garment, you shall be made whole! If your view of Christ is such a poor trembling glance that you seem to yourself scarcely to have seen Him, yet that look will be the means

of salvation to you! If you can but believe, all things are possible to him that believes! And though your belief is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet shall it ensure your entrance into Heaven!

What a precious Savior Christ is! If you have sincere trust in Him, even though it is but very faint and feeble, you shall be accepted. If you can, from your heart, say to Christ, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom,” you shall soon have His gracious assurance, “You shall be with Me in Paradise.” Do not delude yourself with the idea that there is a great deal for you to do and to feel in order to fit yourself for coming to Christ. All such fitness is nothing but unfitness! All that you can do to make yourself ready for Christ to save you is to make yourself more unready! The fitness for washing is to be filthy—the fitness for being relieved is to be poor and needy. The fitness for being healed is to be sick—and the fitness for being pardoned is to be a sinner! If you are a sinner—and I guarantee you that you are—here is the Inspired Apostolic declaration, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And to that declaration we may add our Lord’s own words, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Oh that God would give all of you the Grace to receive this gracious Gospel, whose requirements are so tenderly and so mercifully brought down to your low estate!

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