

His Name Is John

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[0 : 0 0] we're making our way through Luke a couple of weeks ago we looked at the account of Zachariah's service in the temple and how the angel Gabriel appeared to him and this is what he's this is what happened and there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense and Zachariah was troubled when he saw him and fear fell upon him but the angel said unto him do not be afraid Zachariah 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 from his 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 a people prepared for the Lord an amazing statement I wanted to read it today I don't usually do that as we go back and look at what uh we've looked at before but I wanted you to get all the parts of it because there are so much of what we looked at then that are going to either be fulfilled or it's just going to build on that now the thing I want to remind you is that Zachariah did not trust this message so that the angel said he would not be able to speak until the things were accomplished and we've looked at since then how Elizabeth is now pregnant

Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus came stayed and left and it's been nine months of silent waiting what will God do next he will show mercy is what he will do next take your Bibles and look with me to Luke chapter 1 I'm going to start in verse 57 verse 57 and read down to verse 80 now the time for Elizabeth to give birth uh 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 Zachariah 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 hang on here 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 those 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 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 fear came on all their neighbors and all these things were talked about throughout all the hill country of Judea and all who were who heard them laid them up in their hearts saying what then will this be for the hand of the Lord was with him and the child grew and became strong in spirit and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel let's pray father i thank you there is like the peak of amazement here in the sense of god has done something that shows the start you have been merciful to Israel and yet father your mercy is multiplied in this this section we see you as merciful in so many ways you are truly a god who is great and deserves that we sing your praise

and deserves that we bless you pray that in the end we would be people who would be like Zachariah we confess that we can't predict the future but we can say blessed be god and i pray that that would be our hearts cry today in jesus name amen i will start out by saying please don't think that i disregard the order that luke has put this passage in i did not mean to disregard what luke was doing i wanted you to get the feel of nine months of silence and the first words that come out of john's mouth were what i jumped to the minute he could speak after nine months of not being able to speak were those words and we'll get to those words in just a minute i just didn't want you to think i wanted to treat lightly the word of god as we look at this passage the mercy of god to me is one of the biggest things that is screaming in this passage first we see in the first two verses mercy to an old couple they were old people they were people who could no longer have children but god in his mercy brought them through now we've already talked about how elizabeth was pregnant god had enabled her to conceive as an old person enabled zachariah to be the father and the mercy of god here is abundant because we don't normally look at old people as being able to carry babies to have babies there's a reason god gives us children in our youth and all of us who are a little bit older understand that perfectly but god enabled them to come through the aches and pains that normal pregnant women get up with every day i can't imagine how they were multiplied if you were 60 or 70 or however old she was but god enabled her to carry this baby nine months and then god enabled an old woman to give birth young women cringe at the work of giving birth and most of us would assume that an old woman at this point in her age would simply die giving birth just because of the extreme work of it and yet god brought her through and so an old woman was able to give birth to a baby and god continued to be merciful to her because now her reproach was gone her neighbors and relatives all knew her as elizabeth the one who couldn't have children but now she's elizabeth the woman who had a child when she i'll just pick an age who was had a child when she was 75 her reproach was gone her neighbors and relatives heard that god had shown great mercy to her says it right in the verse god had shown great mercy to her and they rejoiced with her but elizabeth wasn't the only one and there's a sense in which even as we talk about elizabeth in that situation uh zachariah had to be strengthened to be able to go through that whole ordeal also

um we won't get into how hard it is for husbands to help their wives through pregnancy because it's a losing battle but god enabled him to help her through also but i want us to see in the next section mercy to the one who had doubted and that's why i read what i read from previous in the chapter at the beginning mercy to the one who had doubted in verse 59 we see that this group assembles for circumcision and naming the baby i guess that was pretty common the at least for the circumcision i don't know we don't know their practices must be that in that day and time it wasn't something that happened in the old testament that we know of and we don't know if it happened long after this but apparently they thought they were part of the naming crew and so as they gathered in rejoicing that this little boy would be circumcised and he would get his name they gathered together and there begins to be a conflict as you read through this account it's just amazing that that they're saying what the child should be named the neighbors have an opinion it just amazes me certainly

Zachariah and Elizabeth they would think certainly Zachariah and Elizabeth they're so old they will they ever have another child they better name this one Zachariah so somebody remembers this name so let's let's let's tell them they need to to name it Zachariah and maybe maybe it was tradition that the people came together and helped named it we don't know maybe they thought it was the best way to honor this couple oh look at them they're 80 years old 75 years old whatever it is and they've had a baby and the whole town is together thinking ah the best thing we can do is name that child Zachariah i don't know maybe they thought it was the best way maybe they thought that since Zachariah couldn't speak the one who would normally have the final say in the matter that they would stand up for what they thought for sure he would want certainly he'd call him after his own name but Elizabeth takes her stand in verse 60 no she he shall be called

[12 : 26] John and you would think that would be the end of it I mean this is not a public child this didn't belong to everybody this child belonged to Elizabeth and Zachariah you would have thought certainly even though Zachariah couldn't talk that Elizabeth and Zachariah had somehow discussed the matter and somehow come to a conclusion and that somehow Elizabeth would be conveying exactly what both of them wanted together but they didn't think that was the case they weren't satisfied they were like little kids between mom and dad mom said no let's go to dad bad bad bad but that's exactly the kind of thing they did Elizabeth said no so let's turn to Zachariah and they made signs to him he may not have been able to hear we don't know some say that this points out that Zachariah couldn't hear not just couldn't speak the word the Greek word can be used for both and there are good arguments that make the case for both ways

I don't I don't know we'll leave that it doesn't matter but the group must have assumed that he couldn't hear because instead of just asking him they play charades and I don't know how would you play charades to say what do you want to call him but somehow they were communicating what do you want to call him somehow they were able to get him to understand that and so at that point he makes reference give me a writing tablet piece of something with wax on it and they would take some sort of stylus and write on it and it could I kind of picture you remember those old wax boards that you had with a piece of like stiff cellophane over it and you would write on it and you could lift it up and it would disappear I don't know it may have been something along that lines but before we go on

I want to talk just a second about the importance of naming in scripture naming was something that was associated usually with dominion or rule remember when God created the world and all the animals remember what it said God brought all the animals to Adam to see what he would name them and God had said you have dominion over all the animals on the earth the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky it was about dominion Adam even as head of the home named Eve so naming has this idea of dominion who would have dominion over this child who would have dominion over this child this was a special child I don't think the group understood this so I'm not going to I'm not speaking in a conspiratorial way

I don't think the group understood this but I think Satan understood this and I think he did his best to get this group to say no let's call him Zachariah let's make dad proud let's make mom proud let's carry on their name and what's the problem with that the problem was that God had already named that child God had said his name is John and remember John was filled with the Holy Spirit from conception this was an unusual child this was not a child who would answer to the people he was not even a child in one sense I mean God did put him under his parents but in one sense he was not a child who would answer to his folks this child answered to God he would be the greatest prophet this is what Jesus said about him he would be the greatest prophet of the Old

Testament greater than Moses greater than Isaiah greater than Jeremiah greater than Ezekiel the greatest prophet of the Old Testament this is God's prophet he would be the forerunner of the Messiah God had named this child the group seems to be appealing to Elizabeth's and then Zachariah's sense of pride wouldn't it be great to have a son named Zachariah we could call him Zach I mean that's just that just sounds right and I can picture this group appealing to them in that way who would name this child was it a temptation to Zachariah was it a temptation to Elizabeth well the writing tablet was brought what group would win would Zachariah give into that flattery we write it in English his name is John the Greek is the opposite

[17 : 53] John is his name his name is John Zachariah chooses to obey God in naming his son and in this act Zachariah shows that he believes God in this act Zachariah shows God's special dominion over this child this son of Zachariah and Elizabeth is going to be what God wants him to be and at this very point it is the climax of the story because the moment Zachariah wrote John is his name is the moment God freed him the moment he could speak again God having disciplined

Zachariah for not trusting is done God could have said because you didn't believe me you'll not speak for the rest of your life God promised that until these things happen you'll be unable to speak and God kept his word and God was merciful to Zachariah nine months of silence is broken at this moment his discipline is done his speech is regained God had lovingly disciplined him as I read at the beginning you won't be able to talk until this is fulfilled Zachariah hadn't trusted God and so God did the fatherly thing Hebrews 12 5 through 11 I'm going to leave out a couple verses in the middle for time's sake have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons my son do not regard lightly the discipline of the

Lord nor be weary when reproved by him for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastens every son whom he receives it is for discipline that you have to endure God is treating you as sons for what son is there whom his father does not discipline and then jumping down to verse 11 for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later he yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it nine months of silence had taught Zachariah to obey and trust the Lord at least in this matter Zachariah had grown after nine months of silence God was merciful to Zachariah but he not only gave him his voice back at that very moment and just it's more mercy is what it is it's more mercy at that very moment

God not only gives him his voice back but he fills him with the Holy Spirit and gives him the privilege of prophesying and Zachariah's first words were to announce to the gathered group the great things God was about to do for his people and so now God has been merciful in disciplining Zachariah God has been merciful when the chastisement was done to end that merciful to give him the spirit merciful to enable him to prophesy and then God turns and swings his mercy at that point from just to Zachariah from just to Elizabeth to the group that's assembled there yea even to the whole world because at that point God in his mercy gives what's called the benedictus the blessedness benedictus being the first Latin word in this in this section gives the benedictus where

Isaiah's or I'm sorry Zachariah's first words are blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people and as Zachariah is enabled he's given this opportunity to prophesy and now it's not just God being merciful to these few these two or to these few it is now God being merciful to all the people who would ever trust him throughout all the ages blessed be God because he's providing salvation the redeemer is here now we know of Christ coming and and we're thankful for it we know the truth that has been up to this point had been up over 4,000 years but to have felt that as an Israelite at that time to have known that the promises were made Eve thought it might be one of her sons and then not him and through the centuries is it my son no never is it this prophet no not that one finally

[23 : 19] God in his mercy is sending his son and that son will bring salvation to all people Zachariah prophesies concerning the Messiah in verses 68 to 75 but he breaks it into two sections he first prophesies that this Messiah the child will announce the Messiah who will come so he's speaking he's standing over John he's prophesying I'll say over John but I mean over top of him he's prophesying over top of John and already looking at the Messiah but in the same time he's recognizing that this John that's right there that's just been circumcised is the one who's now going to go Messiah is here the Messiah is here and so he's showing his mercy and at first he prophesies that this

Messiah has come to fulfill the promise to David and his house blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation horn that which is of authority it's the business end of an ox okay there are other places you can get hurt on an ox but the business end of an ox is his horn it's a symbol of authority God has raised up the horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David prophecies fulfilled line upon even the phrase horn of salvation is from the Old Testament in the house of David as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets of old Isaiah spoke of this Jeremiah spoke of this so many spoke of this Moses spoke of this all of them pointing towards this Messiah that would come and here is Zechariah able to sound forth and say those that prophets have spoken of this one this one not

John the one that's right behind him the one that John will announce he is coming they don't know this but he's what six months away this one who was spoken by the holy prophets of old that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of those who hate them God is raising up a redeemer with power and authority and this redeemer will save his people from all their enemies and then Zechariah goes on to prophesy about the Messiah that this child will pronounce will announce that this Messiah will fulfill the oath to Abraham and his descendants to show the mercy promised to our fathers and 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 so

Zechariah is saying God is raising up a redeemer according to the covenant of Abraham the one that everybody has been looking for this redeemer will enable his people to serve God without fear and in holiness and righteousness all our days the first hearers of this prophecy may have seen this as God restoring the glory to Israel giving them back their land putting a Davidic king on their throne but I think the New Testament points to the fact that this refers to God sending a Messiah who would first of all save and put them in utter safety before God and total freedom from fear before God and then he will take and bring these people to be with him in his land where they will live without fear with him for all eternity and then John gets to continue I'm sorry I did this all through my notes had to change a bunch of them this morning

Zachariah does this Zachariah prophesied prophecies concerning this child his son and you child will be called the prophet of the most high you will go before the Lord to prepare his way 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 he looks at his own son he doesn't think of him so much of his son at that point he is his son and I'm sure he's welling with pride but he recognizes this son is not under his domain this son is under God's domain and this son will be the forerunner to the Messiah and this son will give knowledge of salvation John will point the way to the

[28 : 36] Messiah John will be the one who says behold the lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world that's that's the most famous thing I think John does in all of his ministry the day he sees the dove descend on Christ he says behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world John will point to that Messiah he will lay down the groundwork for the Messiah message of salvation and the Messiah he he'll be a light to point the way to the Messiah people are lost can't see where they're going can't see what's around them but the forerunner will point to Messiah and that will be the light that shows them where they need to be pretty good for a man who couldn't talk because he didn't believe oh so gracious of a

God who doesn't say Zachariah you blew it in one thing you're done but instead disciplines that son that man and teaches him to trust him and then that man goes on to make a declaration well one of us well we can read God's word and make such a declaration but the first one to say the things that he did and to announce the news that people have been waiting for for millennia God has shown mercy to Zachariah to a sinner and then lastly mercy to the neighbors they didn't know what they bargained for coming for a circumcision that day I mean are you going to the circumcision today I don't know yeah

I guess I mean after all they are old couple this doesn't happen yeah I think I will it will be sweet somebody will say some words and you know the baby will cry for obvious reasons and they get there and all this goes on and it's like so many things it makes you go I don't I don't understand but something happened there and fear came on all their neighbors and all these things were talked about throughout 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 God was merciful to this group of people they got to witness the beginning of

God's deliverance people had longed for this as I mentioned for millennia now they've heard something they don't understand all of it they don't understand all that God's doing but the beginning of it here and they were keeping it in mind paying attention to what was going on it says the news began to spread this was an area that was a little bit remote not terribly but the news began to spread and then the last verse it says and the child grew and became strong in spirit and was in the wilderness unto the day of his public appearance to Israel so John grew people were watching him we don't know what his life looked like it wasn't that he I don't believe he went around doing miracles or preached every day he didn't have a ministry until the day the Lord made called him to have his public appearance to

Israel but it was still a curiosity watching a man grow up that you heard such things spoken over you would want to pay attention to that man and that was God's mercy to the whole area we we've made a store there's a special child some amazing pronouncements have been made over this special child well let's watch that child as he grows up and they did so even in the big events of history God is able to show mercy I've just I've just been blown over with this as I've started it was some of the same kind of things I saw as we looked at Joshua and Judges and the Chronicles but this this just has really amazed me in the midst of the big picture what's the big picture

[33 : 43] God is sending his son to be the savior of the world in the midst of the big picture God is working in regular people's lives and the kind of things that are going on in regular people's lives are now there's a little bit of an oddity here not many of us get an angel that comes by and says your son's going to be the forerunner to the Messiah I'll grant you that that's odd but Zachariah and Elizabeth's lives are not too awful different from ours except in that area of the prophecy we have commands from God so often those commands from God look impossible and what's our reaction way too often like Zachariah way too often like God I don't know how you can do this and there's doubt and in the midst of the doubt

God works oftentimes chastening us in various ways unbelievable amount of ways God can work to chasten us and invent events and details of our lives that God works and if you take the the miraculous out of John or Zachariah and Elizabeth's life you have a life that looks a lot like ours God works in their lives a lot the same way that he does us and through it all he's bringing about his will and he does the same with us God is merciful to us calls us to believe and trust his word sometimes we do sometimes we don't when we don't God as a loving father disciplines us but he's still working out his will and here God in his mercy through all of the events that are going on has worked in his servants to where now they trust him so

God blesses them in ways they didn't deserve you can look at Hebrews 11 find all kinds of people who are blessed in ways they didn't deserve was it because of them no it's because of the God we serve in the midst of all that it took for our Savior to come now we could back up through the pages of scripture all the way through the Old Testament and say the same kind of thing time after time after time and I'm hoping through this we don't want to drown the big thing Messiah is coming but I'm hoping through this you see that in your life there is a God who is doing his will but he's merciful now I'm not ruling out his holiness I'm not ruling out his justice those who do not trust in him will pay for their sin in the lake of fire for all eternity

I'm not saying that that's not happening but God in his mercy is working in people he works through our lives we need to be people who see that mercy we need to be people who praise God for that mercy now we may not see the ability to prophesy afterwards but we certainly should be filled with praise when God does these kind of things so all through this situation God has been carrying forward his plan of salvation and like Zachariah we should say blessed be God so one of the other things I wanted to point out from this was the mercies of God lead us to repentance and faith that's exactly what happened to Zachariah God disciplined that was a mercy he was treating Zachariah as his son the mercies of

God should lead us to repentance and faith all kinds of things any kind of things can be going on in your life right now sickness trials amongst many things that God could be doing one of the things he can be doing through that suffering not only growing you but he's leading you to repentance and faith forgive me Lord for not trusting your word help me to trust you help me to trust you so you here you brother or sister here standing you say the events of my life I don't understand what God is doing among the things that God is doing is getting you to trust him getting you to rest on him getting you to see who he is and how good he is to you so let the trials and struggles and the chastening in your life lead you to repentance and faith and the last thing

[39 : 02] I'll say is if you're here and don't know Christ see the mercies of God in these people's lives recognize him as a merciful God but then take the next steps and we haven't gotten there we've alluded to it and certainly you've heard of them the whole gospel is built around this the mercy of God is to send his son to the cross and in the process of that take the sins of his people on himself so that as he goes to the cross he's as filthy before God as you and I are because he has all of our sins placed upon him and then God says or allows Christ to suffer all the wrath against those sins in himself that he might be able to show mercy to you because we're sinners we've done anything that makes us acceptable in

God's sight we've done that which makes us abominable in God's sight so if you're here today and you're wondering what do I do with my sin well you could trust Christ because our God is merciful and he's provided a redeemer for us and so let me urge you trust Christ today young person old person Christ is God's mercy towards you let's pray father I thank you for your goodness to us and lord I thank you for this picture and lord the big thing the big thing is the Messiah we'll talk more about that next week but lord I pray that our hearts would never tire of singing praise to God of living for God because the Messiah came and he bore our sins pray that you would be with us that our hearts and lives would be full of praise but lord at the same time help us to be mindful of the great mercy of

God both in providing the Messiah and in the way you've worked in our hearts and lives and bring about your will I pray that you would be with us you would draw us to yourself we pray in Jesus name amen