



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

January 2, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas

First Lesson: [2 Samuel 7:8-16](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 148

Second Lesson: [Colossians 1:13-20](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 1:68-75](#)

### **Promises Kept: Brings Joy to God's People**

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father, through our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Today we focus on how **Promises Kept Brings Joy to God's People**, but when you think about it, promises that aren't kept have the exact opposite effect. One thing I've tried to be careful to do over my years in the ministry is to not make promises that God hasn't made when I'm ministering to people, to not point people to promises that God didn't make. Quite often when I'm visiting people in the hospital and they are dealing with a health issue of some sort, a lot of people will talk to them and say "Everything is going to be alright. I know everything is going to be alright." They are trying to be positive and encouraging. I understand that. But I try never to say "Everything is going to be alright" because I don't know that. I can't speak that as a promise as God's representative as a pastor and say "I'm sure everything will be okay" and then it's not. Then that quite possibly is going to cast doubt over all the other promises I point you to. So one of the things I've always tried to do is say, "I don't know what the future is going to bring with whatever it is that you're dealing with, but I do know this as a certainty: God will be with you and He loves you and He will be by your side as you go through everything." That's a promise I know God will keep, so I can point people to that promise. But if I start making promises God hasn't made and they are broken after I have spoken for God, that's a problem for God's people and in our ministry.

So today we take a look at how important it is that we can speak promises that God has spoken because all of His promises are "Yes" in Jesus. That's what we heard in our readings today. He promised that He would establish David's throne forever. He sent Jesus and put Him on David's throne forever. He is the exact representation of the

Father. He is the One who has done all these things for us. Zechariah points the people around him to a promise that was kept; that God would establish David's throne forever and provide redemption for God's people in the Song of Zechariah.

I don't know if you remember Zechariah. He was married to Elizabeth. He was the father of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. He was a priest, serving in the temple. God sent a messenger to him and made a promise to him. "You're going to have a son." He told him who the son would be and what he would do. Zechariah didn't believe it. So for the nine months until John the Baptist was born, Zechariah couldn't talk. He was mute that whole time as a reminder he did not believe God's promise to him.

Where we picked up the Song of Zechariah is when John the Baptist had just been born. They wanted to name him and Elizabeth said his name is going to be John. They thought that wasn't right because there wasn't anyone named John in their line, but that's the name that they were supposed to give him. So he takes a tablet when they ask him and he writes on it "His name is John." Then he could start talking again.

After nine months of not being able to talk, the first thing that we know of that came out of his mouth is this song of praise. He didn't ask where the remote was. He talked about God. This is what was on his heart. Look at this song of praise and you see all joy because God kept His promise, because God provided redemption, because God raised up a "horn of salvation." "Horn" in the Bible is always a symbol of strength. He had raised up a powerful Savior. Notice he talks about it as an accomplished fact. He has provided redemption for His people.

Do you understand that at this point in time Jesus hasn't been born yet? He is still in Mary's womb, in Nazareth I suppose. He speaks of it as an accomplished fact. So great is his trust now in God's promises. We are told that right before this, he prophesied. He was moved by the Spirit to sing this song of praise; to talk about who God is and what God has done and the effect it has on God's people. He provides redemption. He sets us free from the slavery to sin so that we have a whole new kind of slavery; slavery to righteousness as it talks about in Paul's letters all the time. Now we are set free FROM sin, death and the power of the devil. But we're also set free FOR something, which he talks about in there as well.

The joy that God's people have because of this service that has been given to them by God keeping His promises is a joy that isn't expressed only in words or in a song like Zechariah's or in hymns like we sing. This joy is expressed, as we are told in here, **"...to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."** God's people are set free FROM the control of sin, the guilt of sin, the punishment that sin deserves NOT so that they just go and do whatever they want but so that they serve the God who has set

them free; so that they live in thanksgiving and joy that God has taken away from them the burden of being perfect on their own. This is the redemption He has provided. The holiness that He demanded of you and me and everyone else in the world, Jesus provided through His perfect life. The punishment that our sins deserved (eternal death in hell) Jesus endured on the cross for us. This is the redemption that He has provided, as Zechariah said, even though it hadn't happened yet.

You and I know it's happened. You and I have seen with our eyes the reason why the baby was born in Bethlehem. You and I have seen the reason why as we've seen Him with the eyes of faith on the cross. We have seen the empty tomb. We have seen all the things our God has done for us so that we no longer live under this burden of keeping the Law. Now we're set free to SERVE. Now we look at the Law not as an obligation (something we have to do), now we look at it as *God tells me this is going to bring me joy. He's never lied to me before so I'm going to do what He wants me to do. I'm going to serve Him, not out of obligation but out of thankfulness. I'm going to live to His glory and do the things He wants me to do.*

The problem is that you and I have a sinful nature. We hear we've been set free and we don't hear the TO SERVE part. Or our sinful nature switches it to we've been set free to BE SERVED. Other people need to meet MY needs.

This is what we've been looking at in the [Here We Stand](#) Bible Study. That's what we'll focus on today. Luther talked about it over and over about how we have been set free from the obligation of the Law so that we can serve. We are free, not under the obligations of the Law, but we are slaves to everyone. We are to live to serve others. In that service, there is joy when we do it out of love for Jesus. But if we slip back into doing it out of obligation or thinking that we have to, we miss the whole purpose of what God has set us free for.

God has been a blessing to us so that He can be a blessing THROUGH us to other people. God has encouraged us with the message of the Gospel so that we can encourage other people with the message of the Gospel. God has given us Word and Sacrament to build us up and strengthen us so that we can be prepared for works of service which God has prepared in advance for us to do, like it says in [Ephesians 2](#).

Don't let your sinful nature say "I don't have to do anything to be saved." You don't. But don't let that become an excuse for not living the way God wants you to in living for others and not just yourself. This is the nature of being a disciple of Christ. Because He has set us free, we understand we are free to serve others. When we focus on God and His love and this redemption He has won for us, and this joy He has brought to the whole world by keeping all of His promises, this service becomes a joy for us. It becomes something that is incredibly valuable and treasured by God's people.

This morning I got up early and I was watching The Sports Center. Do you know who the Kraken are, the new Seattle hockey team? That's right! Your state doesn't have a pro hockey team. You guys probably don't follow it. The Seattle Kraken were playing the Canucks and there was someone right behind the visitors' bench that is studying to be a doctor. On an assistant equipment manager or something like that, I don't remember his title, she noticed a mole growing on the back of his neck and she thought it was cancerous. She tried banging on the glass to get his attention to tell him. Of course everyone bangs on the glass so he didn't pay any attention to that. Finally she took her phone and wrote on there, "You have a mole on the back of your neck that is cancerous. Please go see a doctor and get it checked out" and she held it up there until someone finally saw it and told him. He eventually went to have it checked. It was cancerous. He didn't even know he had a mole there. The doctor said "If you hadn't come to see me, in 4-5 years you wouldn't be here."

Vancouver was back in Seattle and they got to meet each other. That was kind of cool to watch all of that stuff. Then it was kind of cool that the Vancouver Canucks and the Seattle Kraken, the two teams together gave a \$10,000 scholarship to her as she continues her medical training. It's kind of a neat story to see in the morning. I really enjoyed it.

Do you understand that your service to God is along the same lines? You've been called by God to save lives, not just for a time but for eternity; to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with one another, to encourage one another, to hold up to each other the message of the Gospel. I don't care if you do it on your phone or with your voice or how you do it, but you've been called to point people to Jesus. She didn't do it because she thought she was going to get a scholarship. She just did it because she was concerned for this person. You and I do it not because we're going to get something from God. We do it because we want to love the people God has loved. We want to share the Gospel that brings life with the people that don't know it. We want to share the Gospel that brings life to those who are straying away from it. We want to share the Gospel that brings life to those who treasure it but are going through hard times. We want to share the Gospel that brings life with all people at all times, more Jesus to more people more often. That's why we exist as Christians and as a congregation.

We've already received the greatest gift; redemption from the guilt of our sins and the assurance that if you go home and lay your head on the pillow and you don't wake up in the morning, it's okay. You're going to be in heaven. That's a certainty, through the life and death of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7](#).) Amen.**