

Jesu Juva

“The Lord Speaks”

Text: Psalm 62; Isaiah 62:1-7; Luke 1:57-64

We sang in the Psalm earlier: ***For God alone my soul waits in silence*** (Psalm 62:1, 5). That was Zechariah. Struck mute by the Lord because of his unbelief, for over nine months he waited in silence. Maybe it was kind of a “divine time out” for Zechariah, to give him time to think about what he had heard, what he had done, and what God was doing.

For over nine months he had time to ponder the Word of the Lord - not just the Word spoken directly to him by the angel Gabriel, telling him the good news of the gift of a son to him and Elizabeth - but all the Word of God. The Word that came through Moses. The Word that came through all the prophets God had sent to His people. Telling of a Saviour. Telling of God’s plan. That plan that was now being fulfilled in both Zechariah’s son John and in the Son coming after him, the one who would be named Jesus.

That Word came through prophets like Isaiah, whose 66 chapters contain more about the Saviour and who He would be and what He would do than any other book in the Old Testament. Earning Isaiah the well-deserved title of the fifth evangelist. Isaiah tells us of the virgin birth (7:14); of Jesus’ descent from David (11:1-10). Isaiah penned the words: *to us a child is born, to us a son is given* (9:6). Isaiah told us of the suffering servant who would bear our sin and shame (52:13-53:12), and told us that *though our sins be as scarlet, they will be as white as snow* (1:18). Isaiah seems to be the living embodiment of God’s own words that we heard tonight: ***For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.*** Or in other words, until the one who is our righteousness and salvation, Jesus, comes. For all God’s Word is about Jesus.

And old Zechariah and Elizabeth were now part of that plan. Amazing.

So for over nine months, Zechariah got to think about that. ***Once God has spoken; twice have I heard***, the psalmist wrote. Once God had spoken to Zechariah, but those words wouldn’t leave his head. He kept hearing them over and over again, pondering them, meditating on them, and being blessed by them. Yes, for the Word of God is always living and active and Spirit-filled. So these nine months weren’t a punishment for Zechariah, but a blessing. God had to make him mute so that he could listen. Listen to God. Listen to the good news God was speaking to him.

And at the end of those nine plus months, when their child was born and they named Him John, in accordance with the Word they had received from God, then Zechariah’s mouth was opened and he praised and blessed God. He had nine months of praise and blessing

stored up! And we'll look at those words next week.

But for tonight, we can learn a thing or two from Zechariah, for God would speak to you too. Not through a voice from heaven, or the voice of an angel, or even a voice in your heart - no, He has given us a Word more sure than all that: His Word, His Holy Scriptures. His Word once spoken but which still speaks. His Word which is *still* living and active and Spirit-filled. His Word through which the Holy Spirit is working in you, to give you faith and hope and love.

And what is the Holy Spirit speaking to you in this Word? Well, not that you are going to have a son, but that you are a son. *His son!* No matter how old or young, no matter how sinful or lost. As Zechariah found out, you're never too old or too far gone for the miracle of *God's* birth. You're never too old for God's gifts.

But maybe like Zechariah, you don't always listen to or believe that Word. Because your head is too full of doubt, your heart too full of worry, your mind too full of fear, your life too full of the things of this world, and God's Word is drowned out. Or maybe we are too busy telling God what He should be doing, or complaining about what He is or is not doing that we think He should be. And so maybe like Zechariah, we need to be made mute too, so that we can listen.

That's one of the reasons for this Advent season. That we have a time out and stop and listen to the voice of our God and Saviour who wants to tell us of all that He has done for us. His voice in baptism which says you are my beloved son. His voice in the Gospel and in absolution which says your sins are forgiven. His voice in the Supper which says that by eating His Body and drinking His Blood you have His life and salvation. His voice which calls us to repentance and faith. Believe this! That God sent His Son not to be born *from* you, but born *for* you. That, as Isaiah said, you be not *forsaken* or *desolate*, for you are *the delight of the Lord*, the Bridegroom who is coming for His Bride. *For you.*

That is the Word God wants you to hear - a Word even more wondrous than that spoken to Zechariah so long ago. It truly is a "thrilling voice" that is sounding (LSB #345), telling us that Christ is near - as near as the pulpit, the font, and the altar; showing us the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; and assuring us that soon, soon this Son will come again in glory, to take us sons of God to that glory, His glory, bestowed upon us.

Old Zechariah did finally hear that Word. He spoke it, too, when he said: ***His name is John.*** In Hebrew, John is *Jochanan* and means: *the Lord has shown favor.* And truly the Lord did - to Zechariah and Elizabeth, and to you and me. So may *our* tongues, too, be loosed to proclaim and bless the Lord, who has done such great things for us.

Lord God, heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word, Your voice to us still today. When our doubts and fears and busyness make us deaf to Your voice, make us mute that we may

listen to You, hear Your love, and believe. Help us to treasure Your Word and drive all fear from us, that we may live in You alone, and rightly celebrate the birth of Your Son; through the same Jesus Christ we pray, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.