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TRINITY  
BIBLE CHURCH  
DALLAS

The Sermon

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Luke 1:56-66

"A Prophet is Born"

December 3, 2023

TRANSCRIPT

So, I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to the gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 1, and today we're going to be in verses 56-66, and the title of this message is "A Prophet is Born. A Prophet is Born." So as always, I want to begin by reading the passage, then I'll pray, then we'll look more carefully at this wonderful text.

So, beginning in Luke 1:56, this is the word of God: "And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home. Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.

"And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. But his mother answered and said, 'No indeed; but he shall be called John.' And they said to her, 'There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.' And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, 'His name is John.' And they were all astonished. And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God. Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, 'What then will this child turn out to be?' For the hand of the Lord was certainly with

him." What a great passage for us to dive into this morning. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, this is Your word. We desire to observe it and to study it. We desire to apply it. We desire to live out various features of this text in our own lives. Help us to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word. Help us to be different people than when we walked into this building. Even during this next hour, transform us, each and every one of us, into the image of Jesus Christ. I pray that You would come alongside and minister to the brokenhearted, that You would encourage and comfort them. And I pray that You would arouse those who are lukewarm and complacent and blow a trumpet in their ear. And so, Father, teach each and every one of us truth from Your word. Lay Your hand upon me for good. Fill me with Your Spirit, that I may bring glory to your name, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. [End]

In these verses we read about the birth of a prophet, a prophet whose name was John, and specifically, John the Baptist. And this would not be just any prophet for two reasons. First and foremost, because this is the prophet who would be the forerunner for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would be a voice crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord." He would preach a strong message. He would preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And so he was a straight-talking, old-fashioned, fiery prophet. He preached hell's hot and heaven is sweet, sin's black and white, judgment is sure, and Jesus saves. That's the kind of preacher he was.

But the second reason he was such an extraordinary prophet for our attention – so sorry – is there has not been a prophet in four hundred years. There's been silence. And it is the judgment of God upon His chosen nation Israel because they have rejected the prophets that God has sent, and it has reached a point where they crossed the line with God. "And if you will not listen to My preachers, I will not send you any more preachers." And so the heavens were as brass, and it was a judgment of silence. There was a famine in the land for the hearing of the word of the Lord, not a famine for drink or for food, but a famine for hearing the word of the Lord. There was not a prophet for four long centuries.

Previous of that, there had been prophet after prophet after prophet after prophet, before the exile, during the exile, after the exile. And now there's been no message from God. But now with John the Baptist, the silence will be broken. And now for the first time in four hundred years, God will raise up His mouthpiece who will trumpet the word of God to the people, and he will precede the coming of the greatest Prophet who ever lived, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it is only appropriate that this kind of prophet would precede the coming of the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. We would expect even his birth to be a very unusual birth to precede the one who would have the most unusual birth, the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. So let's walk through this passage. It is a very important and key passage that is a part of God's master plan to prepare the world for the coming of His Son.

So, we begin in verse 56, and the first thing that I want you to note is "the delivery by Elizabeth." And verse 56 says, "And Mary stayed with her" - "her" referring to Elizabeth - "about three months." We can only imagine what they talked about in those three months. Elizabeth would share with Mary that "an angel appeared to my husband Zacharias, and said that in my old age I would bear a son. And I have conceived, and there is a child in me." And then Mary would respond, "Well, the same thing has happened to me. An angel appeared to me, but my child would be the result not of a human conception, it would be a supernatural conception," as she would be sired by the Holy Spirit of God. There's never been two women who have had a conversation like this, like these two ladies as for three months. They fellowshiped with one another, and they had so much to share with one another and so much common ground and so much overlap, we can understand why Mary stayed for three months. And Mary has no one else to tell, and Elizabeth has only a handful to tell.

And so, at the end of verse 56, "Mary returned to her home." She returned back to Nazareth. She would have returned to her parents' home. Mary is a young teenage, unmarried girl. She's not out living on her own, she would be under her parents' roof. And so she returns home shortly before the birth of John the Baptist and, ultimately, the birth of Christ.

Verse 57, "Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth." This time had been marked out by God from before the foundation of the world. God has a precise plan not only for what will take place in human history, but when it will take place in human history. And now in the fullness of time, the time has come for Elizabeth to complete her pregnancy and to give birth.

And we read, "and she gave birth to a son." This is exactly as God had said it would be in the message that was given to her, or, really, to Zacharias through the angel Gabriel, that "you would have a son." It's not a daughter, it's a son. "And she gave birth." There was no miscarriage. In this day and time, it would not be certainly a guaranteed thing that a delivery would be successful without the modern conveniences that we have in this day. But because God had said that it would be, so it came to pass. It was an act of God. And before I move on, I do want to underscore that every conception in the womb and every delivery is an act of God. God is life, and God alone can give life. And every one of us here today find ourselves here because of an act of God that took place in your mother's womb.

I'm reminded of Psalm 139, which David wrote. There are some beautiful verses in Psalm 139 that I that I want to read. Verse 13, David said to God, "You formed my inward parts; You wo me in my mother's womb." You see, life begins at conception. It doesn't begin at delivery, it begins at conception; and the hand, the invisible hand of God is already in the womb weaving and crafting and making that person to be exactly what God has made them to be – their gender, their skin color, their temperament, their personality, their size. It's all a part of the divine design.

"You formed my inward parts," the kidneys, the vital organs, the heart, the liver, the lungs – it's all God creating that – "and You wove me in my mother's womb like a skilled artisan would weave a tapestry, a beautiful tapestry, a needlepointing." So God creates each and every one of us in our mother's womb.

Verse 14, "I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." This fear is in David's heart. He is filled with awe that God has made him as He has, and that he is astonished at the perfection with which God has made him.

My father was a professor in medical school for many years, a brilliant scientist and a brilliant professor, and I remember him telling me once as a younger boy, "Steven, I would be a Christian if for no other reason, the human eye." And he said, "The miracle of the human eye, that it can see as it does, its connection to the brain, and then the eye-to-object coordination, that didn't just happen. That's not the result of mud becoming a tadpole, becoming a monkey, becoming a person with perfect eyesight. No, it's God who skillfully made us as He did.

Then verse 15, "My frame," - referring to the bones and skeleton - "my frame was not hidden from You," - meaning it was hidden from everyone else; no one else could see inside the womb and see what God was doing, but God could see what He was doing - "when I was made in secret," - and "secret" is a euphemism for the mother's womb - "and skillfully wrought" - like a Michelangelo masterpiece - "in the depths of the earth," - and "earth," again, a euphemism for the womb - "Your eyes have seen my unformed substance," - I mean, only God can see what we were before we came out of the womb - "and in Your book were all written the days that You ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them."

Did you hear that? God has a book, and God has already pre-written the exact number of days that you will have to live upon the earth . And for each of us here today, it's a different number. For some of us, it's a very short number; for others of us, it's a very long number. And it's a mercy of God that we do not know what that number is, because if we knew it was five days away, we would be filled with dread today. It is God in His goodness has not turned all the cards over to let us know what's in this book. The point is every conception in the womb is a sovereign act of God, as He has created us exactly as He desired to make us. And sometimes some people look in the mirror and are discontent with what they see. You just

need to know you are God's masterpiece, and God has made you exactly as you are.

This leads, second, to verse 58, "the delight by others." In verse 58 we read, "Her neighbors" - referring to Elizabeth's neighbors. These will be those who live in the immediate proximity. Remember that Israel is a tiny little strip of land the size of Dallas-Fort Worth. No one's living afar, way away. And travel was very restricted back then, for obvious reasons, because of mode of transportation. So these neighbors are just clustered all around her and her relatives. Usually families remained in close, tight-knit clusters where they would not be separated one from another. So her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her.

Now, how would they hear that? Well, Zacharias cannot speak. It would have to be from Elizabeth. And Elizabeth is so filled with joy and excitement that God has intervened in her life. And in her older years after she thought she would never have a child, that she would die barren and childless, God has now so worked in her that she is pregnant, and it's coming to the time of her delivery. And, obviously, she would have told everyone what God has done. And they share in her excitement.

You know, when one person is excited about what God is doing in their life, it's contagious, is it not, and it spreads to others around. And we have an opportunity to actually minister to one another just in our excitement about what God is doing in our lives. I mean, we have a choice to make. Either we can be filled with whining and fault finding - and that pulls others down, or we can be vibrant in our faith, and be dynamic and excited about what God has done. And that lights fires in others.

And that's exactly what was taking place with Elizabeth. She was turned on by the Lord and for the Lord. And all the others, they heard this and they gave glory to God. Notice it says that "her relatives and neighbors heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy," literally, His mega mercy,

that God has gone over and above and beyond in an exceptional display of mercy toward her.

Now, the word "mercy" is a constant theme that runs through this passage. In fact, the word "mercy" is found in verse 50, verses 54, 55, 58, 72, 78. I think we get the picture. This is a time in which God is lavishing mercy after all these years of silence. And as though God has turned His head away from His people, now God is drawing near to His people and showing them mercy. As you recall last week, we taught that mercy is God's pity toward those who are hurting and helpless. It is God's compassion. It's His tenderheartedness for those who are in great need. It is God's mega mercy that has been lavished upon Elizabeth; and Elizabeth cannot contain her excitement, and it spreads to others, and they rejoice with her as she rejoices. That's what Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice." I mean, it's easy to rejoice for good things that happen to me, it's a step up to rejoice over good things that happen to you. And that's a part of humility and selflessness to be excited for what God is doing in someone else's life.

And so, verse 58 concludes, "they were rejoicing with her." I mean, there's a message in that even for you and me, for us to rejoice in the good things that God does in the lives of others. I mean, so often in conversations we almost talk over each other. And it's a spiritual thing to listen to others and what God is doing in the lives of others, and then to rejoice in what God is doing in others. And that's what's taking place here. Think about how God can use you in a very similar way.

Well, this takes us deeper now into this passage, and in verse 59 I want you to see "the dedication of John." In verse 59 we read, "And it happened," literally, "and it came to be." Nothing just happens. And it came to be because God brought it to pass. "And it happened on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child." Now why the eighth day? Well, that's how it had been prescribed by God to Abraham in Genesis 17:12, God said, "Every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised." And then this was reaffirmed in the Mosaic law in Leviticus 12:3. I'm sure many of you have been having your devotions in Leviticus 12. So here's verse 3: "On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."

I'm not going to go into details, but the male organ would be cut with a knife, the foreskin would be cut in a somewhat surgical procedure, and there were three reasons for this. Number one, nationally this was a sign that signified that Israel was a nation set apart by God from the other nations of the world, that God had singled out Israel to be His chosen nation, not because they were larger or stronger, but because God chose them. And this was the sign – because circumcision is a cut, meaning a separation – the nation now was set apart from the other nations unto God to be His peculiar people.

The second reason is physiologically. Circumcision has certain health benefits that prevents certain infections. But more than that, third, spiritually. Circumcision was a picture of what must take place in the heart one day, down the road, when the boy comes of age, when he knows the difference between right and wrong and his right hand from his left hand, and can understand the message of the gospel, that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in the coming Messiah alone, that God must circumcise the heart. It becomes a picture of the new birth, that there would be a cut. And the only instrument powerful enough and sharp enough to cut the heart to the very core is the word of God. Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

And so physical circumcision on the eighth day when the child is not of an age to believe the gospel simply is a foreshadowing of what one day must take place in that heart, that the word of God must pierce it and fillet it and open it up so that God takes out the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh. So that's what's going on here in this passage as they come to present their son to be circumcised. And there would be a person in the village who was skilled at this procedure, and they would present the child to be circumcised.

And we read now, "and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father." It's an honor to name a child after someone who's very important to



you, and to name a child after the father is a great honor to the father. And it obviously had become a local and recent custom of the day. Even my last name, Lawson, son of law, would be named a son after the father whose name was law.

And so, verse 60, "But his mother" - that's Elizabeth - "answered." And I love this. I want you to revel in this. "But his mother answered and said, "No indeed." I love that about Elizabeth. I mean, she's strong in the Lord, and she's very decisive. She's not a reed blowing in the wind or a wave tossed back and forth. This is a woman with a spiritual backbone. This is a woman with deep convictions, and she knows what the will of God is, and the will of God is that "you name your son John, and it will have great meaning that you name him John."

So as soon as she heard this, she just put her foot down and emphatically said, "No indeed." It's one word in the original language, but it's an intensified no. It's a compound no. It means no way, not at all, it's just not going to happen. I mean, she's just not dogmatic about this, she's bulldogmatic about this, and she just immediately opposed it and objected, because she knew what the will of God is for this boy, and it is the will of God as revealed by the angel Gabriel that "you will name him John." And so from the very beginning of his life, she wants her son to be on the right path, and it begins by naming him properly as God has required: John.

And so she says actually, "No indeed; but he shall be called John." You see that at the end of verse 60. And so, first of all, how did Elizabeth know this? Because the angel appeared to Zacharias, not to her. And Zacharias cannot speak. So how would she know? Well, as we will see in a moment in verse 63, he would have written this down on a wooden tablet what has occurred, that "this angel has appeared, and we're going to be pregnant, you're going to be pregnant, together, and God says to name the son John." Well, it's such a supernatural thing that she became pregnant. She totally believes what Zacharias has said, "and so he shall be called John." That's found earlier in verse 13 in this chapter.

So, two things about names in the Bible, why this is a big deal. Number one, when someone has a name in the Bible, it is often an indication of who they are, what their character is, what their message is, or what God will do in them and through them. And so in this case, it's true. The name John means God is gracious. And John would be the voice proclaiming the good news of salvation and the one who would follow him. It would be John who would say, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." It would be John who would herald the good news of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the grace of God would just come flowing into people's lives who would repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. "So, yes, his name must be John, because God said so," and because it represents the message that John will bring.

But there's a second reason why this name is so important. Whoever names a child has a authority over that child. That is why parents, not the government, parents should name their children. It represents the authority, the God-given authority that they have to watch over their child and to raise their child in the ways of the Lord. And that is the case in almost every instance.

But here, Elizabeth doesn't name the child. Zachariah does not name the child. God names the child, because God has unusually intervened into this family, and it is God who will exercise supreme authority over John and set him apart to a path that God has chosen for him. And so the naming of John really represents the sovereignty of God over John's life in a very special way, that God has a special purpose for this child to fulfill, that God has a special path for this child to travel, that God has a special message for this child to proclaim.

So, verse 61, "And they" - the neighbors and the relatives - "said to her, 'There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.'" They actually push back and they now apply pressure on Elizabeth to reverse her decision. They are saying to her, "You have broken our custom now by coloring outside the lines, by stepping out of the boundaries; and for you to name him John, no," and they're applying pressure upon her to fit her into the mold of the times in which she lives.

And I want to say this has much application for you and me, should be obvious to you, that we all face peer pressure to be squeezed into a certain mold because everyone else is doing it. And the fact is that when you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you're a part of the few, not the many. We don't receive our directions by counting heads, we receive our direction from above. "There are not many mighty, not many noble that God has chosen; but he's chosen the base things of the world to confound the wise and the wicked." We're on the narrow path, we've come through the narrow door, and few that be that shall find it.

We stand out like bright stars on a dark night. We do not blend in, and we cannot be recast into a certain mold. And as we raise our children, we have core values, and we stick to these core values, no matter what the school that we may send them is trying to perpetrate, no matter what other kids down the street are trying to influence, no matter what's coming through the television screen or on some Internet, or what the government would have to say. We turn a deaf ear to all of that, and we will not succumb to the pressure of the world to fit the mold. We will not go that way.

And that's what I love about Elizabeth. She's willing to stand alone and not buckle under the pressure of her neighbors and of her family and of her friends. You're going to face the very same challenge. I face this very same challenge. And we need to decide right now, today, how we're going to respond tomorrow when that pressure comes to fit the mold of the world. I think of Romans 12:2 that says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." So we cannot be squeezed into this mold. Parents in the way you raise your children, businessmen and ladies in the way that you conduct your affairs, we are God's children, and we go God's way.

Now, this leads to verse 62, and I want you to see, fourth, "the disclosure by Zacharias, the disclosure by Zacharias, because Zacharias is unaware of what all is going on, because he can't hear. And so he sees mouths moving, but he doesn't really know what all is being said. And so we step into verse 62, "But

they" - referring to the neighbors and the family and the friends - "they made signs to his father," - that's Zacharias - "as to what he wanted him called. They made signs" - meaning they were trying to communicate with hand signals, pointing fingers, nodding heads, making certain gestures - "to communicate what they were saying as to what the child should be called." It's clear from this that they're using signs that Zechariah is not only unable to speak, as the angel said he would be, but included in that he's unable to hear. And the word used in verse 22 "unable to speak" could also include deafness. And so that's what's going on here.

So, verse 63, "He asked for a tablet." Now this is not made by Apple Computers, this tablet here, it's a wooden board with wax on it, and you can write, with some kind of a stick or straight instrument with a point, words. And so, "He asked for a tablet and wrote as follows," - and I like this, this what he wrote - 'His name is John.'" Pretty simple, pretty straightforward. Not, "I would like for his name to be John, his name ought to be John, his name could be John."

No, Zacharias is very decisive. He doesn't live in a gray world, he lives in a black and white world morally. And so he says, "No, his name is John." He's very forthright about this. I like this. My father was this way I realized as soon as he said a sentence, the discussion was over. I mean, the old expression, "Don't waste your gunpowder," there's no reason for me to argue this any further; my father has spoken, and there will not be a second statement. It stands. That's the way Zacharias is.

And notice the response: "They were all astonished." The word "astonished" means they're stunned, they're amazed, they're shocked. Why? Because the crowd can always get an individual to back down. The larger numbers can always apply enough force on a person to get them to change their mind. But Zacharias will not change his mind. He has no reverse gear. And so they're all astonished. "He's actually holding his ground with us."

Now, notice, verse 64, "And at once" - that very split second - "at once his mouth was opened." Now, verse 64 is in the right place. It's not verse 62

or 61, it's verse 64. As soon as Zacharias takes his stand and says, "His name is John," then God opens his mouth. And so, "He who's faithful in little shall be given authority over much, and he who takes his stand for God and for truth will have greater things entrusted to him."

And so, in verse 64, "At once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosened, and he began to speak." I don't know if this is intended to be metaphorical or literal. If it's literal, his mouth had almost been glued shut, that no sound is coming out, as if he has lock jaw. And then his tongue loosened gives the idea that when he became mute, his tongue was paralyzed by God, that he couldn't even move his tongue in order for sound to come out, as if his upper and lower teeth were just sealed shut and he could not speak.

But now the tongue is loosened, the mouth is opened. And this is obviously the intervention of God. God's the one who closed it, God is the one who opens it, "and he began to speak" - and I want you to see this - "in praise of God." The first words out of his mouth were not, "Why have You done this, God?" The first words out of his mouth were not seeking sympathy from everyone else or complaining his case like Job. Yes, praise for God.

And this is another indication that what is in the heart comes out of the mouth. There's an old saying, "What's down in the well comes up in the bucket," and what's down in the heart comes out of the mouth. I mean, Jesus said that Matthew 12:34, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." And in Matthew 15:18, "The things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart." I can't see your heart, and you can't see my heart, but you can know what's in my heart, and I have a good idea what's in your heart by listening to what comes out of your mouth.

And here, coming out of the mouth of Zacharias, is praise for God, because he understands that God is doing an extraordinary thing in his life; and it is a part of God's mercy upon him and his wife Elizabeth. But there is a higher purpose, that their son will be great, and he will be the forerunner for the coming of the Lord.

There needs to be praise in our heart for God this morning. And as we greet one another and as we talk to one another and as we have fellowship with one another, yes, we weep with those who weep, and we can share our burdens with one another, yes; but there still needs to be an overriding, overarching anthem of praise that comes from our mouth, and it will if there is praise for God down in our hearts. Is there praise for God in your heart today? Then it will be evident by what comes from your mouth.

There's one last thing that I want you to see and it's in verse 65, and it's "the dismay of neighbors, the dismay of neighbors," because there's quite a reaction now with them. Their pressure tactics could not win over Zacharias and Elizabeth. Look at the first word of verse 65: "Fear. Fear came on all those living around them." This word for "fear" is a Greek word, *phobos*, it comes in the English language as phobia, and it literally means a dread that causes flight. I mean, a person is so shaken up on the inside that they almost want to withdraw and pull back because of something that is so greater than they are or something that has happened and that is far greater than they are right in front of them. And that's exactly how they respond here, with fear. And that's the appropriate response here.

"Fear came on all those living around them," – they're trembling – "and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country." It's just like a ripple effect as it's spreading out; and these matters that are being talked about are Zacharias and Elizabeth have just had a baby, and they're in the senior adult Sunday School class. I mean, how'd this happen? And they come bringing their baby into the nursery, and they go, "No, we have enough workers." And, "I'm not here to work, I'm here to bring my baby into the nursery." Yeah, this is the talk of the hill country.

But more than that, it's that Zacharias, who is a priest, who uses his mouth for God to teach the word of God and to lead others in praise of God, Zacharias has become deaf and mute. But then, now he can speak, and now he can hear. Everyone is really shaken up by all of this, that "God has drawn near to us, and God is in our midst," and God is at work and has produced fear. There's no casual Christianity here.

So, finally, verse 66, "All who heard them" - referring to Elizabeth and Zachariah - "kept them in mind," - well, I guess so. They cannot get this couple out of their mind. They've never seen anything like this. They've never heard of anything like this - "saying, 'What then will this child turn out to be?'" They rightly conclude through the extraordinary circumstances surrounding this conception, this delivery, this circumcision, this naming of the child, "God's at work. God is here. God is up to something. God has a purpose. God has a plan for this child that's very unique."

And so they recognize, at the end of verse 66, "For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him." Even before he's converted, even before he's regenerated, even before he comes to one day have faith in God through His Son Jesus Christ; nevertheless, God who is always previous, God who is always out ahead of the parade, God's hand is upon John to lead him through these early years until he comes to the place where he will be appointed a prophet by God.

It's an amazing thing to think about how God has been previous in your life - where God had you born, when God had you born, from whom, of whom God had you born, where you grew up, where you went to school, who were your friends, who were your teachers, who were the influences around you, where you worked, who your spouse would be, who your in-laws would be. All of this under the mysterious plan of God, God's hand upon John to bring him from this point to one day stand at the River Jordan, and to point, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

As I bring this message to conclusion, I do the same as if John was standing here. I point you to the Lord Jesus Christ: "Look unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added unto you." I point you to Jesus Christ, who is the only Savior of sinners. There is no salvation in any other religion. There's no salvation in yourself. There's no salvation in a church. Salvation is found in God and in God alone - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy

Spirit. And God has demonstrated His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life.

And so I just echo the message of John the Baptist. I channel John the Baptist through my words to look to Christ, believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you're not a believer in Christ, don't leave here today without Christ. You don't want to go out into the world without Christ. You do not want to stand before God on the last day without Christ. You do not want to hear the record read when the books are opened and every sin that you've ever committed in your life is read. You don't want to face that record without Christ. You do not want to hear Him say, "Depart from Me, you who work iniquity; I never knew you." You need to know Christ today, now. You cannot afford to be wrong about this. If you're wrong about this, it does not matter where you are right about anything. This is everything, to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

And so today, the gates of paradise are swung open, and the Savior Himself is calling you, and He says, "Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I meek and lowly in heart. You shall find rest for your souls. For My burden is easy, and My yoke is light." Come to Christ. Come all the way to faith in Jesus Christ, and He will receive you this very moment. You come to Him, and He will receive you. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Our Father in heaven, thank You for Your mercy that You have lavished upon us in Jesus Christ. Thank You that in the midst of wrath, You have remembered mercy; and that despite the magnitude of our sin, Your forgiveness is far greater. And so we revel and we treasure Your acceptance of us through Your Son Jesus Christ. Bless everyone who has come here today. May they carry these truths with them in their heart. As they head to their car, as they drive back to where they live, may they carry this truth with them, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.