

Series: Luke 2024

Title: Thy Prayer is Heard

Text: Luke 1: 8-17

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Place: SGBC, NJ

Last time we were introduced to Zacharias and Elizabeth. They were well-stricken in years and they had no children for Elizabeth was barren.

Luke 1: 8: And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9: According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10: And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. 11: And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12: And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13: But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14: And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15: For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16: And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17: And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.

Notice that phrase in verse 13, "Thy prayer is heard." That is our subject.

Subject: Thy Prayer is Heard

Proposition: Our Lord Jesus is the Intercessor for his people before God so that God hears our prayer.

Luke 1: 13: But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard;

By our Lord Jesus—our Intercessor—God hears the prayer of his saints.

Genesis 25:21: And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

1 Samuel 1:20: Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

Psalms 118:21: I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

Like everything else in our salvation, prayer glorifies Christ. Our prayers are heard due to Christ Jesus our great High Priest. He is our Intercessor with God so that God hears our prayer.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Luke 1: 8: And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9: According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10: And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

Here we see that God ordains, predestinates and brings his eternal purpose to pass. From eternity, God ordained and predestinated Zacharias to be a priest. Therefore the Lord made him a priest

Jeremiah 1: 5: Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

There were many priests. Some say there were over 20,000 at this time. And the custom was that they were divided into courses. In a course there would be enough priests to carry out each part that God ordained be done in the worship service in the temple.

They cast lots to determine what each priest would do. One lot determined who would cleanse the altar and prepare the fire. Another lot determined who would kill the morning sacrifice and sprinkle the altar, and all the vessels in the temple with blood to make them holy before God. On and on it went so that there was a priest to do each thing. Everything involved in

their worship pictured our one High Priest, Christ Jesus, who fulfilled every one of those works for his people.

Zacharias' lot was to burn incense. God brought this to pass.

Proverbs 16:33: The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD.

God had not only elected to save Zacharias in Christ, not only ordained him a priest and made him a priest to typify Christ, not only ordained he would be the father of John the Baptist who would go before and preach Christ but God also ordained Zacharias would be burning incense and praying—interceding on behalf of the people—at the time the angel appeared to him. Brethren, everything God ordains, God brings to pass in time. And God brings all to pass to glorify his Son.

The picture we see in Zacharias praying on behalf of the people is Christ our Intercessor. While the people outside the temple prayed, the priest went into the holy place and burned incense before the altar of incense and prayed on their behalf. It pictures Christ's continual intercession for us in the true holiest of holies in God's presence. Incense typified prayer.

Psalm 141: 2: Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense;...

Revelation 5: 8: And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Revelation 8: 3: And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4: And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

By his blood, Christ justified all his elect then arose and entered the holiest of holies at God's right hand. Christ is our High Priest who has entered into the holiest of holies having obtained eternal redemption for us. He commands us to pray to the Father in his name because Christ is our Intercessor with the Father.

John 14: 13: And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14: If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*.

John 16: 23: And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you. 24: Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full...26: At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: 27: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

Brethren, through Christ our Intercessor, our prayers come to God our Father. Our great High Priest presents our prayer as they ought to be. They are accepted by the merits of Christ's sin-atonement blood.

Hebrews 7: 22: By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. 23: And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

So even in announcing the birth of the forerunner of Christ, God ordained that we would have a picture of Christ our Intercessor in Zacharias. God purposed it, God brought it to pass.

GOD HEARS OUR PRAYER

Luke 1: 11: And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12: And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard;

Christ our Mediator sent this angel. He is an angel *of the Lord*. Scriptures teach that angels are “ministering spirits sent to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.” (Heb 1: 14). Angels are sent by God our Father and Christ our Mediator to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation.

But the mediation between us and God our Father is Christ our Mediator. In sending the angel, the preincarnate Lord Jesus was mediating, interceding between Zacharias and God our Father. Remember, how Jacob beheld the angels ascending and descending on the ladder. Christ is that Ladder between us and God our Father.

1 Timothy 2: 5: For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Christ not only represents us to God, he represents God to us. As we pray, the Lord Jesus intercedes with God our Father for us. But also, when God our Father would grant us our petition, it is Christ who comes to us. Christ sent this angel to minister to Zacharias. He is “*an angel of the Lord*”, an angel of the Lord Jesus.

Zacharias was fearful when he the angel appeared. We have to remember that this could have been the first time the lot fell for Zacharias to offer incense. There were many things to be done in the temple and there were many courses of priests. Therefore, for the lot to fall to one to burn incense was rare. So Zacharias may have never done this before.

Also, remember, the Lord had not spoken to them for 400 years. Now suddenly an angel of the Lord appears.

But the chief reason Zacharius feared is because of the holiness of God and his own sinfulness. When God makes his presence known his child has a godly fear and reverence for holy God.

The only way we are accepted of holy God is to be robed in Christ’s righteousness. It was so of Zacharius. He was righteous in Christ his Salvation. Therefore, the angel and said, “*Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard.*” Christ knows each of his people by name. “*Fear not, Zacharius for thy prayer is heard.*”

We should not be surprised when God answers our prayer? We should expect it. “*Thy prayer is heard.*” That is the only thing we really want, for God to hear us in Christ and for God to work his will for the sake of Christ. Our confidence in prayer is Christ Jesus our Intercessor and Advocate with the Father.

1 John 5: 13: These things have I written unto you that BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD. 14: And this is the CONFIDENCE that we have IN HIM, that, if we ask any thing ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARETH US: 15: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Our confidence is Christ in all things. Our righteousness is not our works, it is Christ Jesus himself. He worked out a righteousness for us and he is our righteousness with God. The holiness of our new heart in which we worship God is not our works, it is “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col 1: 27). Likewise, our confidence to approach holy God in prayer is Christ Jesus alone, our High Priest alone.

Hebrews 10: 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21: And *having* an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Our confidence is Christ. “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21). “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” (Gal 3:13). Christ’s broken body and shed blood is our new way into the presence of holy God. He is our living Way. Our Savior said, “I am the Way...no man cometh to the Father but by me” (Jn 14: 6). We only approach holy God and have our prayers heard through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—through faith in his name—through faith in his blood.

Matthew 21: 22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, BELIEVING, ye shall receive.

Some think by this age, Zacharias had probably stopped asking the Lord to give them a child. But it appears that is exactly what Zacharias was praying for. Zacharias had read about how God gave Abraham and Sarah, Isaac. He had the scriptures which declare how God answered Issac’s prayer and gave Jacob. He knew how God answered Hannah’s prayer and gave Samuel. It was the will of God to give those children. They were children of promise.

That means they were elect children who God produced, who Christ made righteous, who must be born and given faith in Christ.

So it was with John the Baptist. So it was with you, who are the children of God. If our Savior was able to call us out of darkness into his light, if he was able to create a new spirit in us by the power of his grace, if he is able to keep us as he has to this day then we should believe he is able to do whatever we ask, if it is his will. By God's grace, Zacharias believed God. He believed God is able. Do we believe God is able?

Ephesians 3:20 [God] is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,...

GOD IS ABLE

Luke 1: 13...thy prayer is heard; AND thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14: AND thou shalt have joy and gladness; AND many shall rejoice at his birth. 15: For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, AND shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; AND he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16: AND many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17: AND he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.

Notice the word "and" in verses 13-17. We see here that God not only hears our prayer but we see that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. I picture Zacharias hearing that first word that Elizabeth would bear a son and thinking that was all. Then the angel said, "And." Zacharias thinks that is all. Then the angel said, "And." God did far more than Zacharias asked or even thought about. That is our God!

Brethren, pour out your heart to the Lord Jesus, asking the will of God be done. Christ is our Righteousness before God. He is our Advocate with the Father. He is our Intercessor who God our Father hears. Therefore, for the sake Christ Jesus our High Priest and Intercessor, God our Father hears our prayer and works his sovereign will on our behalf.

Amen!