

TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; // John is “the prophet of the Most High” leading the way for *the Son of the Most High!*

- a. **77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins,** **78** Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, // God wants us to know we are sinners who CANNOT save ourselves. Then, *to such people*, John proclaimed the good news – God’s full forgiveness *through the Christ of Christmas!*
- b. **79 TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH,** To guide our feet into the way of peace.” // God shows us our spiritual darkness; *then He calls us to true peace in Christ!*

Now I will praise You, O Love Eternal; Now I will praise You All my life long.
Therefore I’ll say again: God loves me dearly, God loves me dearly, Loves even me.

Conclusion: **80** And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel. // That is when John called everyone to repent! Jesus said: “...unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3 NAU) To repent is GOD’S WORK →to show us the utter darkness of our sin, →to make us sorry, and →to unite us to the Christ of Christmas!

A *worldly* Christmas includes temporary gifts, which will eventually become ♦broken or ♦lost or ♦rusty. Therefore, *let’s celebrate Christ!* He is Christmas, *God in the flesh* – the Gift that keeps on giving the super-great blessings of →forgiveness, →joy, →peace, and →so much more!

This Christmas and always, *let us celebrate and trust in THE CHRIST of Christmas!* And all God’s people said: *Amen!*

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The Birth and Future of John the Baptizer!

John Prepared the Way for our Lord Jesus Christ by Calling People to Repent!

Based on Luke 1:57-80 NAU

The Nativity of our Lord – 2011

December 24 → 6:00

“God Loves Me Dearly” LSB 392

God loves me dearly, Grants me salvation, God loves me dearly, Loves even me.
Therefore I’ll say again: God loves me dearly, God loves me dearly, Loves even me.

I was in slav’ry, Sin, death, and darkness; God’s love was working To make me free.
Therefore I’ll say again: God loves me dearly, God loves me dearly, Loves even me.

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, *thanks for gathering with us at BLC!* With the last few sermons we have been focusing on the extraordinary events of Luke chapter 1:

- Even though Elizabeth was beyond the childbearing years, *she conceived John the Baptizer!*
- Even though Mary was a virgin, *she – by the Holy Spirit – conceived the Christ of Christmas!*

Why did God cause such extraordinary things? Because God was in a HUGE PREDICAMENT: He wants to bless us now and forever, *but our sins have separated us from God’s eternal blessings.* Let’s continue with Luke chapter 1 to discover how God overcomes His HUGE PREDICAMENT:

1. **Birth, Naming, and Fear:** **57** Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. **58** Her neighbors and her relatives heard that **the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her;** and they were

rejoicing with her. ⁵⁹ 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. ⁶⁰ But his mother answered and said, “No indeed; but he shall be called John.” ⁶¹ And they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.” ⁶² And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. ⁶³ And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished. ⁶⁴ And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he *began* to speak in praise of God. ⁶⁵ Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ 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. //

- a. Miracles – → Zacharias could not speak, → Elizabeth – *though barren (unable to conceive) and old (beyond the child-bearing years)* – conceived, → the child was named John (*unlike any relative*), and → the tongue of Zacharias was loosed (*after nine+ months of silence*). **God was at work in extraordinary ways!** Even tonight God is saying to us: *Pay attention; then ♦know, ♦benefit from, and ♦rejoice in the true meaning of Christmas!*
- b. Reaction – “**Fear came on all those living around them...**” The people didn’t know but they wondered: “**What then will this child turn out to be?**”

He sent forth Jesus, My dear Redeemer, He sent forth Jesus And set me free.
Therefore I’ll say again: God loves me dearly, God loves me dearly, Loves even me.

2. **The LORD speaks through Zacharias to tell us about JESUS:** ⁶⁷ And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit [*so He spoke by the HS*], and prophesied, saying:

- a. ⁶⁸ “Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, // All people are helpless to save themselves; therefore, *we all need God to come to us and buy us back!* God did just that in Christ, *the Savior!*
- b. ⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant-- ⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old-- ⁷¹ Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; // “horn” – think *Thanksgiving*, a horn of plenty. Then, apply the idea of *plenty* to salvation. We each have many sins, **even one closes the door to heaven**, but God’s salvation is *plenty, abundant, sufficient to save every person through the Christ!*
- c. ⁷² To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, ⁷³ The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, // The LORD said to Abraham: “...in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...” (Gen. 22:16 ESV) That “offspring,” *that holy seed* is JESUS, *the Christ!*
- d. ⁷⁴ To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. // In Jesus, *the Christ*, our sins have been removed; now, *as forgiven children of God*, we live ♦in peace, ♦with joy, and ♦without fear of condemnation!

Jesus, my Savior, Himself did offer; Jesus, my Savior, Paid all I owed.
Therefore I’ll say again: God loves me dearly, God loves me dearly, Loves even me.

3. **The LORD speaks through Zacharias to tell us about John:** ⁷⁶ “And you, child [John], will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD