

**Luke 1:68-70**

**A loving plan**

This passage is known as the Song of Zechariah. The elderly priest has been mute since he refused to believe the angel Gabriel's message that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son who would be 'great in the sight of the Lord'. Here, filled with the Holy Spirit, he breaks his silence and praises God for fulfilling his loving plan to free his people from their enemies.



**Bible notes**

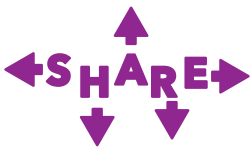


Zechariah's song is known to many as the Benedictus. The elderly priest breaks the silence that descended when he doubted the angel's message that his wife would bear a much-wanted son (Luke 1:8-20). His first words for months praise God – not for releasing his own tongue, but for fulfilling his loving plan to free his people from their enemies. It is a mark of his confidence in God that he can celebrate the coming of the long-promised Saviour before he is even born (vv.69-75). He knows that God's purposes for Israel are unshakeable and have deep roots in his promises to Abraham and the house of David. Notice how broadly-based God's salvation is: deliverance from foreign oppression and the fear this induces (v.74), so that his people can be free to serve God (vv.74-75); forgiveness alongside political freedom (v.77). These often come together in the prophets, who see defeat and captivity as the consequence of Israel's repeated unfaithfulness (e.g. Isaiah 40:1ff).

Like the prophets and poets before him, Zechariah rejoices because God prefers to remember his ancient promises and plans rather than Israel's chronic failures. As God's messenger and prophet, his son John will herald the dawning of a new age. Its freedom and forgiveness will be like the light of a new day that rises on those who have lived for too long in the dark night of exile and foreign occupation. Light that shines by God's 'tender mercy' (v.78) is a reliable guide for the coming new world that the promised saviour will bring, one that is at peace with itself because God's loving plans for all people are at last being revealed and realised.

**First impressions**

- What involved in planning a special event for a loved one?
- How is God's plan revealed through the story of Zechariah?
- What loving plans can you make during Advent?



Cut coloured paper into heart shapes and write verses about God's love on them. Leave them in unexpected places during the week; inside a library book, under a menu, on a shop shelf, left on a café table, on a bus seat, for people to find.

**REFLECT**

Take time to reflect on what has happened in your life over the past year or more. Look for ways in which God has worked out for things to happen to you, around you, or through you to bring his message of love home to you or someone else.

**LOOK**

Get outside and watch the sunrise or sunset. Remember God's faithful love that shines on us day after day.

**Pray**

Creator God,  
you are wonderfully big.  
You made the stars and the seas.  
You made us and you love us.  
Sometimes we don't understand all your plans.  
But may we always know your great love.  
Amen.



**LISTEN**



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