

Our New Name

Luke 1:57-80

In Luke 1:57-80 we find God's new covenant program (begun in 1:5-25) is underway in the birth of John – the herald of the king. Although this new covenant work is still in budding form at this point in the narrative, those who are witnesses at John's circumcision (the neighbors and relatives) are baffled at the reality of what has taken place in their midst, and what is in the process of taking place. Something as simple as a name ("John") and the miracle that attests to the name (1:64) signals something about God's work that is on the horizon. The sunrise was poking through the horizon and would very shortly visit God's people from on high in the Messiah. The 400 years of silence would be ended in short order, and Zechariah's prophetic expression of praise found in *The Benedictus* (1:67-79) exposes God's new covenant work.

Although these saints looked *forward* to the work of God to come in the Messiah, whereas we *look back* on the work of the Messiah, this text still highlights three crucial points of the gospel that are of utmost relevance for us today. First, in the gospel God's people are given a new name. Just as John's name indicated something about God's work on the horizon, our "new name" as Christians – those who are "in Christ" – indicates something about our king, and even shapes who we are by virtue of the relationship we have with this king. Second, in the gospel God's people are given a calling to serve. We found in the first seven verse of *The Benedictus* a multiplicity of promises that would be realized in Christ. Yet the goal of these promises and thus the goal of our salvation is "...that we, being delivered from the hands of our enemies, **might serve** him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (1:74-75). Finally, in the gospel God's people are given hope. Just as the sunrise visited God's people from on high in the Messiah "...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (1:79), so too we await the finale to this grand act of redemption whereby the resurrected and ascended Christ visits his people again to erase all traces of darkness and death.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn from this sermon? Specifically
 - a. What insights did you learn?
 - b. What questions do you have? Are there any areas you don't understand?
 - c. What areas of your life (be specific) do you sense God wants to change as a result of this passage of Scripture?
2. It was mentioned in the sermon that our "new name" doesn't erase our individuality or our uniqueness, but instead sets our individuality in its appropriate context for human flourishing. What does it look like when you pursue your unique vocation or calling autonomously vs. as an adopted child of God?
3. How are you currently serving? Are you serving according to your giftedness?