**Reflections 8 – 14 December 2024**

**Bible study on Luke 1:68-79**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Lord, as we learn to know you better,
may our love overflow more and more
so that our lives may bring you glory and praise.
**Amen.**

 **Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

Luke 1: 68-79

**68**“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
    because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
**69**He has raised up a horn[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%201&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24963c)] of salvation for us
    in the house of his servant David
**70**(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),
**71**salvation from our enemies
    and from the hand of all who hate us—
**72**to show mercy to our ancestors
    and to remember his holy covenant,
**73**    the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
**74**to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
    and to enable us to serve him without fear
**75**    in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

**76**And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
    for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
**77**to give his people the knowledge of salvation
    through the forgiveness of their sins,
**78**because of the tender mercy of our God,
    by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
**79**to shine on those living in darkness
    and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

 **Bible notes**

The lectionary leaps forward to the ministry of John the Baptist that heralds the start of Jesus’ ministry. As with the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-2), Luke is careful to root John’s proclamation in the period of Roman occupation. Tiberius rules through Pilate and the Herodian royal family. Annas and Caiaphas owe their priestly authority in Jerusalem to the same emperor. By contrast, John is directed by ‘the word of God’ (v. 2), the prophetic call that enabled Isaiah, exiled six centuries earlier in Babylon, to hope for a salvation that ‘all flesh’ would see (v.6). This is now entering a world governed by a greater empire than that of Babylon. God’s loving plans for the world are taking shape in unlikely places. The wilderness was a region of complaint, rebellion and testing, where God’s people seemed to have lost their way to freedom (Psalm 95:7-11). But for one prophet at least, it would be a hopeful place of new beginnings (Hosea 2:14), which is why John is there, preparing the way of the Lord by offering a simple ritual of washing to symbolise God’s call to repent.

**Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

Children hate to wait. How often do we give them something immediately out of personal convenience or sheer necessity? Might they learn to understand that with a little waiting and care and thought, there might be a better plan? Maybe we need to learn this lesson too in relation to God’s plan for us.

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

**Questions**



* What is 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

 **Prayer**

God of the old and the new,
we praise you for the faithfulness that goes
before and behind all your people:
**we celebrate your loving plan for the Church and the world.**
We praise you for your compassion for all creation,
big and small, rich and poor, near and far:
**we celebrate your loving plan for the Church and the world.**
We praise you for this season of hope, of truth and of promise:
**we celebrate your loving plan for the Church and the world.**
In Jesus’ name.
**Amen.**