

When Grace Comes

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the profound impact of God's grace on the lives of John the Baptist's parents and the importance of faith in God's promises.

Duration: 1:19:19

Scripture: Luke 1:58-59, Luke 1:67-69, Luke 1:72-79, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal experiences and reflections on the grace of God. He talks about how he prayed for one of his children to go to Africa and spread the gospel, and how God answered that prayer. He also mentions how his family has been blessed with sons-in-law living in their house, and how this is seen as a sign of God's grace. The speaker emphasizes the transformative power of God's grace, both in individual lives and in society, and encourages the audience to seek and experience this grace in their own lives.

Transcript

Our text we find in Luke chapter 1 from verse 57 Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her they rejoiced with her. So it was on the eighth day that they came to circumcise the child and they would have called him by the name of his father Zacharias.

His mother answered and said, No, he shall be called John. But they said to her, There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name. So they made signs to his father what he would have him called.

And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote saying, His name is John. So they all marveled. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea.

And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts saying, What kind of child will this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him. Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied saying, Blessed is the Lord God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people. And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets who have been since the world began.

That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant. The oath which he swore to our father Abraham.

To grant us that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear. In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. And you child will be called the prophet of the highest for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.

To give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins. Through the tender mercy of our God with which the day spring from on high has visited us. To give light to those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the ways of peace.

To give light to those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the ways of peace. So the child grew and became strong in spirit and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel. We'll stop there.

This is an amazing story. Where it relates of the birth of John the Baptist. The Lord said of him there was no one greater of woman than he.

You probably remember that John was filled with the Holy Spirit while he was still in his mother's womb. And it was through divine power that he was even born. His father was Zacharias.

Mother Elizabeth. They were both old. Past child bearing age.

That they were believers. People of faith who served God. And then God revealed himself to Zacharias and told him, revealed to him that they would receive a son.

And told him that his name would be John. John means the grace of God. It's a wonderful name which today is used in many different variants.

John or Janice. The birth of John had been prophesied many years before through the prophets. Isaiah who lived about 740 B.C. He already prophesied about the coming of John.

And Malachi too. And he prophesied about the coming of Jesus. He also prophesied about 430 years before Christ.

If we had time I would love to have spoken. I just had a sermon on what Isaiah prophesied and then another sermon on Malachi's prophecy. They prophesied that he would be the one coming before the Messiah, before the Lord Jesus to prepare the way for him.

Now the parents of John, Zacharias and Elizabeth were real people of faith, real believers. And God revealed to them that they would receive a son. His glory, his power in their family, in their marriage.

And as you've heard, Johannes, John means the grace, the mercy of God. Now I'd just like to say something about Zacharias. Zacharias was an upright man who, together with his wife, they both served the Lord in an upright way.

There was no fighting and arguing and disunity between them. Zacharias, as a man, was very good. He was a man of faith.

And when Elizabeth was married to John, he was very good to her. When the Lord had revealed to Zacharias that he would receive a son and that his name would be called John, he shared it with his wife. And she didn't argue with him Even though it went quite against tradition Because normally a child a son would be named after the father So his name should have been Zacharias But God said no his name will be John Now as Zacharias being an upright man of faith when he heard that he would receive a son He doubted He said is it possible that I can receive a son at this age Can it really be true that even my wife can still bring a child into this world at our age How is it possible? God But in god's eyes that was a grievous sin So god punished zacharias for it and he said because of that You will not be able to speak until the child is born That just shows us how seriously god takes sin Why This upright man of god Because he doubted what god had told him that was a serious thing in god's eyes And he doubted not only the word of god, but the promise of god And god judgment god's judgment came upon him God says you won't be able to open your lips again Is Oh, good thing.

I'm a boss. And she caught on cool. Cool.

Walked out on Dennis on his cool. What's the one case? He's a what he is. He's a ring gun.

Gave up. He may say, let me come my Lord. And if you look how severely God, uh, God's judgment came upon that's in that's in of doubt, which may be you say, well, start, I just doubted a little bit, but if you just, if you see how severely God punished that doubt in his life and he said, he will not be able to speak as a result.

We see how seriously and severely he punishes that sin of doubting God's word. Funny. He couldn't even speak to his wife.

He had to take a slate and, and write on it. She taught. And God said, you will receive a son.

He doubted it. And that's how severely God punished that sin in his life. But we Christians, we take sin lightly.

We tell a lie, we doubt, we do things and we just take it lightly. Back. This should shake us.

If we are believers, if we, when we see how seriously God, uh, punished this and of doubt, doubting God's word, doubting God's promise. We think doubt is just a small thing. It's a minor thing, but before God at something major, we dare not take lightly.

What God says God doesn't change. What he did to Zacharias, he'll do to us too. Go.

It may just manifest itself in a different way where we may be able to talk and maybe we'll talk a lot, but a person talks and talks, but it is meaningless. It is insignificant. It doesn't touch anyone's heart and move him to repentance.

Yeah. We speaking of an upright man, um, someone who served the Lord faithfully. Uh, we're not speaking about a drunkard or lying or immorality.

No, it was this man of faith who allowed doubt into his life. He doubted what God had said and promised in a long time past. And the child was born a temple.

When they went to the temple for the circumcision before the ceremony, they spoke to Zacharias. In fact, they then said, well, his name will be Zacharias. And then the mother spoke up and said, no, he will not be

called Zacharias, but John.

Then they said, well, let's ask the father. They called him in and he asked that they bring a tablet. And then he wrote on it.

Oh, good. And he wrote that his name is John. And when he had written that suddenly he could speak again.

And the neighbors and everyone and all around, they were all amazed. They said, what kind of child is this going to be? So this child got a name that went totally against their tradition at that time. He got a different name.

She won't go to a name which God had ordained and given. So that should make us who have children and give them names should give us something to think about. No, my God, this is a way we would like to know.

I don't know what you're saying. I don't know what you're saying. You so easily just give the child any name.

You call it mouse or cat or skelum or being criminal, and then that child grows up to be what you call it. You should prayerfully consider what name you should give your child. Yes? Yes? When they said the name must be John, the neighbors and everyone said, but how can you name him John when there is absolutely nobody in the family that has that name? So you can see the whole family turned against him and were against him in this.

So it's an amazing story. And it reveals God's power. And when afterwards Zacharias could speak again, they all marveled.

They couldn't believe it. And they said, what kind of child will this be? It also reminds us of that child, Jesus, when he was born and how he grew up. Now this child, John, grew up in the desert.

That's where he lived. And later that's where he had his ministry. But that's where they lived, in the desert.

So the relatives and the neighbors, they were all present there at this circumcision ceremony. And it also reveals to us how God's grace and mercy was at work in this child's life. And the child grew up in the strength of the Lord, became strong in the Lord and in spirit.

And this grace and mercy was also evident in the life of the father and the mother. And it was in this way that this child was brought up. Blessed are children who have parents like that.

So this child grew up in the desert there with his parents. So God's grace was at work in their lives. Even while the mother was carrying this child, God was working through her in the child's life.

And so when the circumcision ceremony was to take place, they all wanted to go along because they'd noticed this is a special child. So the grace of God that was at work in Zechariah's life spilled over even to the neighbors, those around him. So when God's grace works in your life, it will affect you, but it will also affect those around you, your family in the first place.

And then even further, reaching out even to the neighbors. So God's grace was at work in their marriage. No fighting, no arguing, no disharmony.

But God's grace was evident. Excuse me if I mention my family. But I want to thank God for his grace.

If I see God's grace at work in my family, if I look and see my children, then I am amazed at God's greatness. His grace. When my eldest daughter was finished with her schooling, I asked her, well, what career do you want to pursue? And she said, I don't want any other career.

I want to follow in your footsteps. I want to become a missionary like you are. And then the second daughter, it was the same thing.

And then the third one, the same thing. And then the fourth one. And then I even asked them, I asked them, I said, but are none of you like your mother that want to do what your mother is doing? You all want to do what I'm doing.

And then the fifth one and the sixth one, and every one of them said the same. And then when it came to marriage, the first one to get married called her, sat down. I asked, I said, well, if you get married, where are you going to stay? And even at that time, we were already short of accommodation.

And I said, if we just had to build a house for all the families, the co-workers that are here, the co-worker families. And some of the co-workers were living in rondavels, some even with children already. And then I said, well, I won't be able to just build you a house, because people won't understand if you as my daughter get a house when other co-workers don't even have one yet.

They're still in a rondavel. And she said, that's not a problem. And then she said, well, would you be prepared to speak to my future husband and ask him whether he would be prepared just to move in here with us, where I'm staying in my bedroom.

I said, oh my, now you're putting me into something. And I said, well, that's a difficult thing to ask a young man, to ask him to move in under my roof and that he has to stay with his in-laws. And so I spoke to Nico, and I said, well, what do you think about this idea? This is what Naomi suggested.

What do you think about it? And then he said, well, that would be absolutely no problem. In fact, it would be a privilege if I could move from my rondavel and stay here in the house. So I then went back with the message to Naomi, because we don't do it that they just chat to each other.

So I said, well, this is what we've discussed. Chat or flirt together. So she was happy.

So he moved into the house and stayed there in their bedroom. Then the second one came. I asked her, well, what will you do? I explained to her.

And she said, well, for me, it wouldn't be a problem. Can't we do it the same as Naomi did it? You see, she learned from Naomi's example who went ahead and did it. And then the next one came and the next one, but they all happily accepted it.

Today, I think that was God's grace. And then the two last ones. I forgot your name.

Dorothea. You were the first one. My brother at that time.

At that time, my brother came back from Europe and said, there's a young man over there, a good young man. And he feels that the Lord is leading him to get married to Dorothea. I said to her, well, you've got to pray.

I said to her, well, you've got to pray and ask the Lord what, how he's leading you. But remember, he lives in Germany. And so you've got to, you need to know what, how the Lord leads you.

But it was interesting that he came from that area where our forefathers came from originally. So I said to her, well, you pray and ask God what he says. And about two weeks later, she came back.

She said, Papa, I don't know whether you will understand what I'm going to say to you now, but I prayed about it. But it's as if God is saying to me, yes. She said, ask him whether he is going to be faithful to the Lord all the days of his life, right to the end.

And if he says he will, then I'm prepared to go. And no matter where it takes me. And I phoned him and told him what her answer was.

Then he said to me, Uncle Elo, I honor her for what she says. And then he had stayed here. He came and stayed here for a while.

But I didn't even really notice him because there are so many people here. I didn't really notice that he was here. And he asked that before he gets married, he'd like to come and stay here for a while, for about three weeks.

When he came, I greeted him. I asked him, well, what plans he had for the future. And he said, no, nothing has changed.

We will live in Germany. And so I told my daughter, I said, look, he still believes that he needs to move to stay in Germany. So you must prepare yourself that you will be moving there.

But I said, don't worry about that. Because the greatest thing is that he has promised that he is going to be faithful to the Lord. And then I said, well, and I don't know how long I'll still live, but if it does happen that I get very, very old, maybe I'll even come over and stay with you there.

Just to comfort her. So maybe I could even stay there then, with you. So I didn't see him after that.

It was just that one time because he didn't come over there. He just stayed here. The day he left, he came to say goodbye.

He said, well, I'm on my way and I'll be back for the wedding. So he went. I just forgot something.

Dorothea at that time had said that God has said to me, I should say yes, but thereafter, close your mouth. So she shut her mouth. But just before the wedding, she said, she doesn't even know what to pick because she doesn't know whether she's going to get married or not.

Whether she's going to go to Alaska or Siberia or to some tropical place where she needs cooler clothes. I think that was one week before the wedding day. I said, well, what had God told you? She said, well, God told me to keep my mouth shut.

I said, well, do that. If God says shut your mouth, then you shut it and you'll see. So when they went, when he came, I asked him how it would go.

And he said, no, it's still the same. We'll be moving to Germany. So I thought, okay, well, obviously he's got a German head.

It's a bit like the Zulus have too. Germans have a hard head. So after that, after those days, he came to say goodbye.

So when I said goodbye, he added something. He said, oh, by the way, is there a bedroom here at the mission? I said, well, why do you ask about a bedroom? He said, I have a problem because since I came here every day, God is clearly saying to me, you shouldn't go back to Germany. You must stay here at Sizabantu.

Do you want to stay here? Because you said you're going back. And he said, well, I also thought I was going back. I was sure about it, but since I've come here, it's as if every day God is impressing it upon me that my place is here.

I should stay here and even get my pilot's license that I can fly you around. Then he said, look, I'm sharing this with you confidentially. Don't tell Dorothea about it.

I want to tell her myself when we married. I said, that's fine. And I didn't tell her.

They got married. They went. But that's when he then told her that, look, my plan is not to go back to Germany.

I want to stay here. You see why I say it's God's grace. And then the youngest one, Esther.

And then my brother said, but that's also a nice young man, a Christian boy. So he spoke to him and said that he feels he should get engaged to Esther. Well, if you go and buy meat here in the butchery, now you'll know through whose hands it went.

When I told Esther about this young man wanting to get married to her, I asked her, well, what do you say? She said, does he live in Europe? I said, yes. If I get married to her, must I go to Germany? Because God has called me to work here. God has called me to be a missionary among the Zulus.

God has called me to be a missionary among the Zulus. I cannot go there. I think you must just tell him I can't go there.

Unless he is prepared to come here. I just cannot go against what God has called me to do. God has called me to work here among the Zulus.

I cannot leave. I phoned him. I said, well, I've spoken to my daughter.

And she says, if you cannot come here, then she wouldn't be prepared. But then he agreed immediately. I was amazed that he could agree to something so quickly.

I said, no, for me it's no problem, because I already had heard the Lord calling me there to Africa. I said, what will your father say? And when he then went to his father to tell him what was on his heart, and he told him that God is calling him to Africa, the father started crying, the tears rolled down his cheeks. And he said, for a long time I've been praying and asking God to take at least one of my children to go to Africa to spread the gospel there.

And when I then spoke to the father, he was so happy. He said, I for a long time have been praying that God will call one of my children to Africa to spread the gospel. Do you see God's grace in a family? It's not my doing.

It's God's doing. But then the thought came to me, what will people say if all my sons-in-law move into my house? You notice I'm getting a bit older. I forget their names.

I can't tell you everything. It would take too long. But it was just like, it was the same with them.

I once had a pastor visiting here from a big congregation, and I told him, I said, well, it's quite a thing. I'm living here with six sons-in-law in the house. He said, well, you are blessed.

That is God's grace. Because even if you're old, even when you're no longer there, the gospel will continue. You know that I have six daughters, only six daughters.

My mother once comforted me, as well, and said, don't worry that you only have daughters. Because sons don't really know how to look after their parents. Daughters do it far better.

So you will it will be it'll go will go well with you when you're older So I have the six daughters Then one day I was thinking I've only got six children and I love children I thought I wish I would have a dozen I got married late My first child was born when I was 40 so I thought well I'll never get to a dozen children If a child follows the Lord, if the Lord's in the child's heart it's like heaven But if a child doesn't follow the Lord and is in the world and serves the devil, even one child is too many But then one day after they were all married I suddenly realized now I've actually got the dozen children That I've always wanted And I even said And I even said Lord I'm thankful that you didn't give me a son because maybe that son would have been unfaithful to you Maybe he'd have run

away, gone his own ways But now you've given me sons-in-law that are better than sons to me So we could all, all 12 of us live under one roof And then the children arrived The grandchildren and well some people think my house is big but it was hopelessly too small But then the children said that it's no problem if visitors come, they just moved out of their bedrooms and the visitors could stay there Now with the Chinese, their word or their way of describing fighting is a house with a door and two windows and two women inside That is the way they describe a fight Two women in a house is the recipe for a fight But that's the case if there's no grace There's no John, no grace in the house But you can also come and see for yourself Come and visit us and see for yourself It's a bit like in

Holland where they don't have curtains The windows are just open, you can look inside from outside And the Dutch tell me they do that because they've got nothing to hide The people walking past are welcome to look inside So God worked in Holland that they got to the point where they said Well our life is in the open, we've got nothing to hide, anyone can look inside and see how we live here Now when you meet up with God's grace experiences, it starts in your own life and then in your family Now when you meet up with God's grace experiences, it starts in your own life and then in your family Now recently I've been able to experience when parents come here whose young men have come here through Mpagati and then they ask that the parents should come that they can be reconciled to them, make

right with them And I've often been able to be present when these young men make right with their parents And then I see tears coming to the father's eyes, to the mother's eyes when they hear their child speak like that And then you say that is God's grace that has come to them That's how God's grace works, you experience it, then your family experiences it and then even your neighbours and those around you experience it That all the nations will experience God's grace If you think of the Jews when Jesus came, they crucified him, but just look how they suffered If Jesus isn't in your life, in your family, in your surroundings, then it's pitch black Think of where our forefathers came from, northern Germany Before

they experienced the Lord Jesus, they were idol worshippers Here in Africa,

some people put the horns of a cow on their hut, on the grass outside It has to do with occultism and witchcraft Now in northern Germany, they used horses for their witchcraft And there they displayed wooden horses on their houses Here in South Africa, amongst the Zulus, it's ancestral worship Here in Germany, they didn't use bones for their witchcraft But they used horses, and the noises they made, that is how they came to their conclusions and diagnosed what the problem was They also worshipped idols Godan is one of them That's the god of the trees And then Doner was the god of the weather, or the storms And then there was another idol, which was a female idol And Heta was also a female idol That was the goddess of the earth And Hela That was the god of hell Then the gospel came, grace

came, and they changed and served the Lord Jesus And the gospel came, and they changed and served the Lord Jesus They also had a church, and they also had a church But they were sent away to the world They were sent away to the world, and they were separated, and they were sent to London of a pot.

See how God's grace changes things? Can you imagine a German drinking his beer out of a human skull today? No, because God changed all that. So all these idols which I've referred to are no more.

Why? Because of God's grace, his gospel. And even here in Africa, when the gospel comes, grace comes, then all the things that have to do with the ancestral worship and occultism falls away. It comes to an end.

Because of God's grace. Has God's grace worked in your heart life? In a spiritual sense, have you become a John where God's grace has been revealed? Where the past is something of the past. It's no longer that immoral life and lies and fighting because God's grace came and changed you.

John, God's grace came and prepared the way for the Lord in the desert. The one who receives and accepts God's grace will experience heaven. Even a family that accepts the Lord into their midst will become like heaven.

And even a nation and nations that accept Jesus and God's grace, that grace will be at work in their midst. And then I could go on and on and tell you about other families like the Duber family and Lord willing I will tell you that another time. Do you know God's grace? We speak of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know it? Have you experienced it? Are you experiencing it every day? If not, it will be like hell for you. But if you experience and live under God's grace, it's like heaven. Let us pray.

We thank you Lord for the grace you've revealed to us that you revealed to us through John and Zacharias and Elizabeth. Thank you Lord that grace still works even today. Lord work that no one will trample underfoot that grace and despise it.

Amen. Amen.

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