

TFTD Lent 2025.02: March 6th

And you, child ... Luke 1.67-80



A priest in the Church of England is supposed to say the Benedictus every morning. Which is a bit odd if you just think about what the Benedictus is. These are the prophetic words that Zechariah spoke to his infant son John, who would go on to become John the Baptist. And no disrespect to Zechariah, as they say, but he's essentially a bit part player in the Gospel story. And no disrespect to John the Baptist, but as the man said himself, he was not worthy to untie the thong of Jesus' sandals. So why are we saying his words every morning?

I think we say them every morning because these are powerful words that express the faith God has in ordinary human beings set in the context of a theology of boundless hope.

Zechariah's words begin and end by reaffirming the narrative of God's redeeming work in the world.

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, born of the house of his servant David.

*Through his holy prophets God promised of old to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,*

To show mercy to our ancestors, and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:

to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

*Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.
In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

There is really no theological basis for pessimism, you see. And into this narrative of what God is doing in the world, Zechariah inserted these commissioning words for his infant son:

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of all their sins.

This is what you are going to do, son; this is your part in the redeeming work of God and the Saviour he is sending to us. And that is why we say the Benedictus every morning. We day these words and it reminds us of the redeeming work of God and the small part God calls us to play in that work, to tell people about what God is doing and to them of God's mercy and love.

My favourite words in the Benedictus are, 'and you, child...' Partly, I think, these words help me to understand that God has a part ready for me to play even though I am small and insignificant. And partly, because I remember holding my infant children in my arms, when they may have appeared small and insignificant, but to me they were not insignificant at all. They were significant and full of promise. As are we all.

God bless,
Robin

