



**DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS
4 & 5 DECEMBER 2021
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

**“O DAYSPRING”
LUKE 1:68-79**

- **Begin by reading the Scripture passage together.**
- **Review the video of the sermon if needed (see <http://www.brnc.org.sg/category/resources/sermons>).**
- **Feel free to discuss as few or as many questions as best fits your group’s current context and present stage in life.**
- **Remember to budget some time (15-20 min) to pray with and for one another, before ending your group session.**

***O DAYSPRING, Brightness of the light eternal and Sun of justice:
Come, and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.***

***O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thy justice here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

The antiphon O Dayspring would traditionally be read on the winter solstice for the Northern hemisphere – the day with the longest night of the year. The hope of a saviour is compared to the warmth and goodness of the rising sun amidst the darkest night (Luke 1:78-79).

Physical darkness is a metaphor for a deeper and more dangerous darkness – sin. The prophet Isaiah was writing to God's people who were in a gloomy situation, where the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians and its people taken into captivity. This was caused by the root problem of sin. Yet, even in such dark times, Isaiah proclaimed: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (9:2), and describes the birth of a special boy: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" (9:6). Through the Son, the dark oppression of sin will be broken.

God has shone forth this great light in Jesus Christ. Those of us who submit to his kingly rule can look forward to the final day of the Lord, when, as said in Malachi 4:2, "the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings".

If you have time, you may want to read Isaiah 9:1-7 and Malachi 4:1-3 briefly in your small group.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Zechariah speaks of how God has come to his people and redeemed them by raising up a strong Saviour (this is the meaning of the idiom "horn of salvation" in v.69), thus fulfilling the promises God had made to David (v.69) and Abraham (vv.72-73).**
 - a. What did God promise to David (see 2 Samuel 7:9-17), and to Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-3)?**
 - b. What do these tell us about what God's salvation will look like?**
- David would have a great name (2 Sam 7:9), God's people would dwell in safety and security (7:10) and rest from all their enemies (7:11), and David will have an offspring who will reign forever (7:13-16).
- Abraham's descendants will be a great and blessed nation that is a blessing to others (Gen 12:2). God will bless those who bless him, and curse those who curse him. Also, all peoples on earth will be blessed through him. (12:3)

- God's salvation will be achieved by a strong king who will establish God's people as a great nation, which will bless all the peoples on earth under his eternal rule. This was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, the awaited Messiah and King.

2. What are some intended effects of God's salvation? (vv.71-75)

- That we would be saved from our enemies (vv.71,73). The Saviour will deliver us from all enemies, even the greatest enemy itself – sin and death (see 1Cor 15:26, 54-57).
- That we can serve Him without fear (v.74). God's salvation enables His people to serve Him, not out of a fear of punishment, but out of a desire to delight and please and worship Him.
- In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days (v.75) God not only cleanses us and grants us forgiveness (justification), he also transforms and renews us from within, enabling us to live in purity and righteousness (sanctification).

3. From verses 76-77, what is one aspect in which John the Baptist will prepare the way for the Lord? What does this tell us about how Jesus, the strong Saviour and King, will establish his kingdom, as described in 1(b)?

- John the Baptist would help give God's people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins (v.76)
- John went on to do this by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3).
- This puts the focus of salvation front and centre on the forgiveness of sins. The kingdom will not be a physical kingdom ruled with political or military power.
- Rather, by securing the forgiveness of our sins, God frees us to serve Him in holiness (see Q2), dispelling every darkness of fear and sin, that as his people under his rule we may be a blessing to all peoples (see Q1b).
- Jesus, the promised Saviour and King shines on us just as the rising sun coming out from heaven (v.78). We ought to respond with joy and praise just as Zechariah did!

Response, Application, Prayer

- 4. God has saved us that we might come under His rule, submitting to him and serving him, doing so without fear in holiness and righteousness (vv.74-75). Do you struggle with submitting to God? Do you struggle with serving him without fear in holiness and righteousness?**
 - a. Remember that Jesus is not a king who compels allegiance, but a Saviour who draws near to visit us with his presence (vv.68 & 78) and who offers us undeserved mercy (vv.72 & 78). If we receive his gift of mercy with gratitude, then we become citizens in God's everlasting kingdom. And as his subjects, we ought to serve him, not out of fear but from a heart of thankfulness for all he has done.**
 - b. In what ways or areas is the King calling you to a deeper submission, surrender, or service to him? In what ways or areas is the Saviour calling you to greater holiness and righteousness? Share with one another, and pray for God to work in one another's hearts, minds, and lives in the areas shared.**

- 5. Have there been any situations or periods where you felt like you were living in darkness or in the shadow of death? Share with each other.**
 - a. As you do, praise God for the joy we have in Jesus, whose light has dawned upon us.**
 - b. Consider also how you would encourage one another to wait with hope for the sun of righteousness that rises with healing in his wings.**
 - c. Finally, pray for one another, especially for those who need a visitation (vv.68 & 78) of God's presence.**