**CLEAR UP ONE SERVICE**

**Series Slide**

Have you ever wondered why “silence” is such a part of our Christmas tradition?

* One of the most beloved Christmas hymns is “Silent Night”.
  + But when you read the account of Jesus’ birth, it doesn’t seem to be so quiet…angels in the sky singing, shepherds praising God….then there’s that Little Drummer Boy …it doesn’t seem very silent.
* You remember that line in Away in a Manger where the cows moo and baby Jesus wakes up…but, don’t worry…no crying he makes?
  + I can assure you, as a real human baby, Jesus cried.
* Even the Night Before Christmas poem about Santa Claus starts off with “not a creature stirring…not even a mouse.”
* So, Why is it so important to us to make Christmas a “silent night” when all indications were that it was actually a chaotic, loud, and crazy night.
* Well, because the Silence of Christmas isn’t about decibels.
* Its about Disaster. Death. Darkness.
* The silence of Christmas is about your friend that died in car accident and you can’t figure out a God who had the power to stop it but didn’t.
  + Why was he silent when you needed him to do something?
* The silence of Christmas is about your husband that’s leaving you and doesn’t say a word as he walks out of the door.
* The silence of Christmas is about the 10 minutes that feels like an eternity… between the sonogram where the technician can’t find a heartbeat and the moment when the Doctor comes in the door and confirms your worst fears.
* When we think of Christmas…we think the “heavenly peace” we sing about is quaint little baby Jesus sleeping…
* …we think of children being nestled snug in their beds, presents under the tree. Fire in the fireplace. Cocoa in the mug. Everything under our control.

The truth is, we don’t have control, and we can’t stand silence.

* Because silence seems helpless.
  + We refer to those who are in a helpless position as people without a voice?

We hate things associated with silence. Like waiting. Or awkwardness.

* + Ever tried to just sit with someone without talking or doing something?
  + Has any 14 seconds of your life seemed longer than a ride on the elevator with a person you don’t know?
  + We are constantly trying to drown out silence with talk about the weather, with a quick check of the smartphone you JUST CHECKED 30 seconds ago…
  + We are so dead-set on not having to wait or think a thought in silence that would trouble us…that we even fake doing something on our phone…just to have a distraction.
  + ….we hate silence because we hate being helpless…and we hate waiting with no power. We hate having nothing to say. We hate not having control.
* So we’ve made the silence of Christmas the empty sentimentality of a sleeping baby.
* **Title Slide- “Silent Night, Raging Bull: What a Baby in a Manger Does to the Darkness” Luke 1:59-79**
* And for the rest of the Christmas season, we try to make as much noise and busy-ness as we possibly can…or else we may ask ourselves “Why we are even celebrating a God that has let us down SO MANY TIMES?”
* So, Christmas has become more busy than it is contemplative.

Its become less about waiting in silence, and more about distracting ourselves.

But, for some of you, the silence of God, or a husband, or a heartbeat is too loud to ignore. And you’ve become disgusted with all the noise of Christmas…because no gift, or tree, or family gathering is going to bring you out of a very dark place.

* Today, I want to show you what Christmas…or rather Christ… does with those dark places.
* …and I want to show *you* what to do with silence…because there is a way that it can destroy you…or there’s something you can do in silence…in darkness…in a place of complete lack of control…that will save you.
* **TRANSITION TO BIBLE STORY**
* See, Jesus wasn’t the only birth at Christmas that the Bible tells us about.
* There wasn’t just Joseph and Mary…there was also Zechariah and Elizabeth.
* Zechariah was a priest in the temple…and Elizabeth was probably Mary’s Aunt.
* …but unlike Mary, Elizabeth was very old. And she and Zechariah had never had a child…though they longed to be pregnant.
* Elizabeth and Zechariah were salt of the earth kind of people.
* But in that day, people took your inability to have children as some kind of punishment for your sin.
* So here are these great folks, a priest, and they have been praying for years to have a baby.
* All the while people are looking at them kind of like, “Wonder what you did to deserve this?”
* They asked God over and over for a child. …And nothing happened. Silence.
* Now, at the same time they are praying for a child, as a good Jewish priest, Zechariah has been praying for God to bring a Messiah. A deliverer for Israel. Salvation.
* Then God, after a long, long, long silence...
* … answers both of Zechariah’s prayers with a yes.

Gabriel the angel shows up to Zechariah while he is performing his temple duties and delivers God’s “Yes”.

* He says “You are going to have a baby, and that kid is going to grow up to announce to everybody the arrival of the promised savior.”
* Now, you would think Zechariah would flip over this! Throw a party.
* But, the long silence and the darkness he has walked in for years…the darkness Israel has walked in for 400 years…never hearing a peep out of God….
* …that silence is too overwhelming.
* So even in the face of an angel…even with the best news that Zechariah had ever heard…he simply says “Prove it.”
* Take a Look at **Luke 1:18**
* **And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.”**
* When Zechariah says “How will I know you are going to do this?” He’s not asking out of curiosity…he’s saying… “This is ridiculous.”
* He’s saying, “My wife and I have asked you for years and you’ve been silent. You can’t do it. I’ve given up hope for a child long ago. If you are going to do this, you better prove it to me first…see God, you’ve been silent…its too dark.”
* …and its too late now. You weren't there when I needed you. Don’t come at me now with your lofty promises. And don’t think that I’m gonna believe you now without you putting some skin in the game. You don’t know what I’ve been through. The nights sitting up crying with my wife as she tells me about another of her friends who got pregnant. Then Hanukkah after Hanukkah, we spend watching other peoples kids light the Menorah. I’ve listened to other people talk about my wife behind her back. All the while I have faithfully served you. Don’t show up now with more promises. Give me something real.”
* …And God says in reply “Silence! Shut your mouth!”
* Take a look.
* **V 19-22**
  + **And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute.**
* Sure enough, Elizabeth was pregnant. And 9 months later, she birthed a son.
* …and during the entire pregnancy, Zechariah lived in total silence. He couldn’t speak…and likely, he couldn’t hear either…He was forced by God to live for 9 months in silence as he watched this miracle unfold. Forced to live for 9 months without noise…just deafening silence.
* **Luke 1:59-64**
  + **And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.**
* So what does it sound like when you can’t talk or hear for 9 months after you see an angel who tells you everything you have been praying for the better part of your life is unfolding right before your eyes?
* Well…it sounds like this:
* **Luke 1:67-79**
* **And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,**
* **“Blessed be 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 from of old,**
* **that we should be saved from our enemies**
* **and from the hand of all who hate us;**
* **to show the mercy promised to our fathers**
* **and to remember his holy covenant,**
* **the oath that 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 our days.**
* **And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;**
* **for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,**
* **to give knowledge of salvation to his people**
* **in the forgiveness of their sins,**
* **because of the tender mercy of our God,**
* **whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high**
* **to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,**
* **to guide our feet into the way of peace.”**
* **TRANSITION:** I want to show you today what God wants to do with your silence….and how he is using HIS silence to transform the way you use yours.
  + First…
* **1)** **Don’t stay silent about doubt, or you’ll start blaming God for breaking promises he never made.** 
  + Zechariah was a priest.
  + He wasn’t the only priest of the temple…in fact, he was one of probably about 18,000 priests.
  + **Luke 1:8-9**
  + So when he is “chosen” by what probably appeared to him to be random chance to enter into the most holy part of the temple to burn incense…you have to realize…this is a once in a lifetime…maybe a once in 3 lifetimes opportunity for a priest.
  + But it seems he views it as simply a religious duty.
  + Let me tell you why.
  + As a Jewish Priest, when Zechariah burns incense, he’s praying for the fulfillment of all God’s promises.
  + He’s thinking back to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah…and he’s looking at all the promises God has made to save his people…to never leave them alone…and he’s praying for the promised savior to come.
* **Back to 1)**
  + Now, you need to understand, at this point the people of God haven’t had any kind of word from God, no prophet has spoken for God for 400 years.
  + 400 years of silence from God.
  + Additionally, Zechariah and Elizabeth have been praying for a child…and its been nothing but silence.
  + It makes sense that Zechariah would doubt that God was moving. It makes sense that Zechariah would find it difficult to believe that God could do something with his prayers.
  + I get that.
  + But the thing is, he remained silent about his doubts.
  + See, he continues praying for a child…he keeps up the religious façade of priesthood and entering the temple to burn incense…why? I don’t know.
    - Maybe its because religion is such a part of his life he doesn’t know what else to do other than go thru the motions.
    - Maybe its because he doesn’t feel safe in his culture admitting his doubts.
  + But whatever the reason is, when an Angel shows up in his face with a message from God that BOTH his prayers for a baby AND for a Messiah are answered…all of his hypocritical cards are shown.
  + See, if Zechariah was really trusting God to answer his prayers, when the angel shows up he wouldn’t fire back with cynicism.
  + Fear? Yes.
  + Confusion? Absolutely.
  + But his cynical “God prove yourself” answer is the result of hidden doubt that was covered under a religious veneer that turned into a cold bitterness toward God.
  + So, since Zechariah was silent about his doubts…when he opened his mouth there was nothing but the cynical cry about a God who can’t make good on a promise.
  + **APP:** Listen, there is this idea that the church has perpetuated that if you talk to someone honestly about doubts you are having about God… it means that you are a bad person. Too many of us think we can’t talk about those.
  + But its not true. Not only should you talk about your doubts with the people of the church…the people of the church should listen. Pray with you. And help you find answers.
  + And remember, when expressing your doubt to others, be prepared NOT just to be heard…but also, to be challenged.
  + We can’t just express our doubt to feel better…we want to do it in a way that searches for what’s true.
  + But the biggest travesty, is we don’t take God up on his invitation to cry out our doubts to him. Just take a look at the Psalms.
  + **This is Psalm 88:13-18**
  + **But I, O LORD, cry to you;**
* **in the morning my prayer comes before you.**
* **O LORD, why do you cast my soul away?**
* **Why do you hide your face from me?**
* **Afflicted and close to death from my youth up,**
* **I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.**
* **Your wrath has swept over me;**
* **your dreadful assaults destroy me.**
* **They surround me like a flood all day long;**
* **they close in on me together.**
* **You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me;**
* **my companions have become darkness.**
  + Listen, God is SOOOO NOT AFRAID of your doubts and questions that he even puts them in the book that he reveals HIM to us.
  + Do you get that?
  + He is inviting you….to cry out to him in prayer…from your darkness…and to talk with the people of the church about what you find unbelievable. And if you don’t know what to pray…start right there. In the Psalms.
* **Back to 1)**
  + Because if you don’t confess your doubt, you’ll never have anyone to help you confront it…you won’t have anyone to help you understand it…you’ll hide it and it will grow into a cold cyncisim that even an announcement of salvation from an angel won’t break through.
  + But you’ll be very vocal to others about the thought that God has never done anything for you. You’ll tell everyone about the promises God broke…that he actually never promised you.
  + God doesn’t promise a happy marriage. Or a marriage at all.
  + He doesn’t promise the number of years we get to live…or our children get to live…or that our children will grow up to respect us…he doesn’t promise the size of our families…or who will and won’t get a deadly disease.
  + …but he does promise that he will be with us in the silence and the darkness.
  + **TRANSITION:** And the only way to see that, is to stop being silent about your doubts…and then to be quiet and listen to the way he answers those doubts. Because…
* **2)** **God answers doubts with powerful promises. But you have to be patient, weak, and silent to hear them. (…and we’re pretty terrible at all 3 of those things)**
  + Doesn’t it feel like God just took Zechariah and said “You sit in the corner for 9 months cuz you’ve been bad.”?
  + That’s not what he’s doing. He’s putting Zecheriah in a powerless position.
  + **AND when God moves you to a position of powerlessness…its not because he’s punishing you.**
  + …he’s trying to show you the truth…
  + THAT YOU’RE WEAK and YOU NEED HIM.
  + Think about the Exodus of Israel. Zechariah is likely thinking about it when he talks about Israel’s redemption.
  + The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 400 years.
  + They cried out for God to deliver them…so God sent them Moses.
  + Moses comes in as God’s messenger, tells Pharaoh to let his people go, and finally, after death visits in the darkness…the people of God are freed and they walk off into the wilderness on their way to the promised land.
  + But then they run up against the Red Sea…and Pharaoh changed his mind.
  + So they look in front of them…and they see an impassable sea.
  + They look behind them and they see an unstoppable army.
  + Then they said to Moses, “Did God bring us out here to die? It was better in Egypt!”
  + Even though, God had just miraculously delivered them by virtue of 10 plagues that only affected the Egyptians.
  + **…**But see, 400 years of God’s silence can wear on you. And even in the face of angels…you’ll tend to be a cynic.
  + **Now, here’s the part I want you to see.** The part that’s going to explain what God was doing with Zechariah when he shut his mouth…and what God was doing with Israel by having them wander in a desert…and what God is doing with you in the dark, silent moments of your life.
  + **Exodus 14:13-14**
  + **And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”**
  + Isn’t that what you want?
  + Isn’t that what you pray for?
  + God fight for me.
  + God take the impossible darkness I see in my life today…and make this the last day I ever see it.
  + When God heard the cry of Israel in slavery, he didn’t immediately make things better…in fact, for all they could see their situation got worse. With the Red Sea at their front…and the Egyptian army at their back…they told Moses “Why did you bring us out here to die…we were much happier in slavery?”
  + And Moses said… “Shut up! This is not your fight. You can’t do anything about the impossible. But with God, all things are possible.”
  + The LORD will fight for you today…you have only to be silent.
  + **Luke 1:20**
  + For Israel in the desert…and Zechariah in the temple…and you in all the impossible situations like death, disease, addiction, rejection…and your most enslaving sin…
  + …If God seems silent…he wants you to cry out. And then he wants YOU to be silent and wait. Because he wants to show you his strength. Maybe not change the death…or the disease…or the rejection…or even get rid of the temptation…but he wants to show you his power in keeping any of those things from overcoming you.
  + **In silence, he wants you to know how little you can do…and how much he can do.**
  + **APP:** You ever get frustrated with the litany of commands in the Bible that tell you “Don’t fear. Don’t worry. Don’t be anxious.”?
  + I bet if you hate being silent, you also hate those commands.
  + Here’s why we hate those commands, why we hate waiting for someone else to act on our behalf instead of …well…taking the bull by the horns.
  + Henri Nouwen puts it like this in his book of Advent readings called *Watch for the Light:*
  + **Waiting is not a very popular attitude. Waiting is not something that people think about with great sympathy. In fact, most people consider waiting a waste of time. Perhaps this is because the culture in which we live is basically saying, “Get going! Do something! Show you are able to make a difference! Don’t just sit there and wait!” For many people, waiting is an awful desert between where they are and where they want to go. And people do not like such a place. They want to get out of it by doing something – Henri Nouwen**
  + A counselor friend of mine has often reminded me of the Anxiety equation.
  + **Anxiety = Uncertainty x Powerlessness**
  + You know how multiplication works. If you can make either of the factors a zero…The product will be zero.
  + You have to make Uncertainty or Powerlessness a zero…and good bye anxiety.
  + Sometimes, we can reduce uncertainty…with a good schedule, a routine, and realistic expectations.
  + But you know, if you happen to follow a God who is constantly calling you into what you can’t see…
  + If you happen to follow a God who says “Get ready for the impossible.” A God who says “Get up and go to a land that I’ll show you when you get there”. A God who says “In your old age you’ll have a baby”…
  + …its really hard to get a routine going around the un-expected. Its really hard to eliminate uncertainty.
  + ...which means…the ONLY WAY you can obey the command of God to NOT FEAR…to NOT BE ANXIOUS…is to trust he has all the power to accomplish in you and through you what he’s called you to.
  + That’s why His Word is replete with scriptures that call on us to acknowledge our lack of ability to FIX THINGS.
  + **Like this one.**
  + **2 Corinthians 12:7–9**
  + The apostle Paul asks God over and over for him to change his uncertainty. “Just take away this pain…this darkness…this messenger of Satan…this thorn in the flesh. I can’t control it. Just give me back control of my life…and then I’ll eliminate my anxiety.”
  + But God says. “No, my grace is not taking away your pain. My grace is me using my power to get you through it.” Your anxiety will be eliminated in your weakness…giving way to HIS POWER. In you BEING SILENT….and letting him FIGHT FOR YOU
  + And that power? Well…it's the power of Christ.
  + Do you see that? YES God calls us by faith into SO MUCH UNCERTAINTY…
  + …but He graciously zeroes out that anxiety equation by giving you all his power.
  + And he zeroes out uncertainty with promises about how he’ll use his power.
  + But you’ll never grab a hold of that power if you don’t hear his promises and believe them.
  + And we’ll never hear those promises as long as we’re flapping our gums with excuses, blame-shifting, or quaint platitudes and Oprah-isms that ARE NOT THE GOSPEL… which is the POWER of God for SALVATION.
  + When faced with powerlessness… Your choice is to pretend like you have some kind of power to turn things around…or you can turn to his promises…which is exactly what Zechariah does.
  + **In Luke 1:70, 72, 73, …**
  + …when John the Baptist is born to Elizabeth…God finally opens the mouth of Zechariah…and look what pours out. A reflection of God keeping his promises. And a deep faith in the one’s he hasn’t yet brought to fruition.
  + See it?
    - V 70- what God spoke by the mouths of the old prophets
    - V 72- he promised our fathers he would show mercy
      * He made a covenant with his people that I’m remembering now.
    - V 73- he swore an oath to Abraham that had nothing to do with what Abraham could do…but only what God was going to do for him
  + God forced Zechariah into silence….and instead of spending his days trying to talk…he listens.
  + He looks back at God’s promises. So that when God opens Zechariah’s lips…Zechariah doesn’t rail at God for making him silent…he praises him for promise-keeping.
  + We hate waiting. We hate being powerless. …and we are a very anxious people.
  + And God hates when we try and steal his glory by being our own salvation. By providing our own power.
  + **APP: Listen…**Some of you are in dark circumstances and God has put you in a helpless place of silence. Use it. To see him…not to run from him.
  + Some of us have no silence in our lives whatsoever. No contemplation. Will you turn off the phone and computer and radio and TV this Christmas season. Will you get uncomfortable? Will you be quiet?
  + And when you are silent…turn your ear to the gospel. The good news of what God has done…and what he promises to do about darkness and death.
  + The good news that even though in the dark and silent nights it SEEMS that he’s not at work…you can be assured just as Zechariah prays…**v 78** that because of the tender mercy of our God…that the darkness will end…the silence will break…and **the sunrise will visit you from on high.**
  + Remember David? The guy who wrote most of the Psalms?
  + He had a promise from God that he would be king…but instead…in the years between being a shepherd and becoming a king…he ran for his life, threatened and chased by King Saul. He hid himself caves.
  + And in the quiet darkness of a damp cave…he was VERY UNCERTAIN…and had a great temptation to feel utterly powerless.
  + In fact, there were many instances where he was tempted to use his own power, to kill Saul, and take the throne.
  + But instead …HE CRIED OUT TO GOD…and in the silence he reflected on God’s promised salvation.
  + And the result is…when he opened his mouth again…out comes Psalm 62
  + **Psalm 62:5-8**
  + **For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,**
  + **for my hope is from him.**
  + **He only is my rock and my salvation,**
  + **my fortress; I shall not be shaken.**
  + **On God rests my salvation and my glory;**
  + **my mighty rock, my refuge is God.**
  + **Trust in him at all times, O people;**
  + **pour out your heart before him;**
  + **God is a refuge for us.**
* **Transition:** You know…Jesus wasn’t born…most probably…in a stable. More than likely…it was a damp, dark cave. And just like David, in the darkness of *his* cave…our hope of salvation rests on that tiny little baby…who had in his pinky toe more power than Herod who wanted him dead. …and more power than all the darkness that surrounded them could ever have.
* The Baby in that manger wasn’t just a baby. He was also a BULL. See…

**3) The power of God is a weak baby that becomes a raging bull.**

* + Did you see that as Zechariah talks about the future…the promises of God not yet fulfilled… he’s not talking about political salvation. He’s not talking about Israel being freed from the Roman government anymore…which was a popular understanding of the Messiah at that time.
  + In **v 77** Zechariah is talking about spiritual darkness. He’s talking about the very thing that keeps us from God and alienates us from one another.
  + Our sin.
  + This salvation to come…the one that Zechariah says will allow us to serve God WITHOUT FEAR…without the anxiety of being rejected…its going to come through this little baby that Zechariah and Elizabeth’s new son is going to grow up to proclaim.
  + This child born to Mary will be the MOST HIGH.
  + Listen, All the darkness in your life is somehow connected to spiritual brokenness.
  + Its connected to sin
  + Either sin against you, to the original breaking of Creation due to sin…or, like Zechariah…due to your own unbelief.
  + You know, after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden and all of humanity and creation began to die and break and come undone…a warning is given to Cain, Adam and Eve’s son that later killed his brother in the very first murder.
  + **Genesis 4:7 & 1 Peter 5:8**
  + **If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”**
  + Do you see the weight of this warning?
  + If you DO WELL, then you’ll be accepted. But if you don’t…sin is crouching…like a predator…waiting to eat you alive…SO..you’ll just need to conquer it.
  + In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter says your adversary…the devil…the tempter…the father of lies is waiting to pounce on you like a lion.
  + **APP:** Does that describe how you feel about your darkness? Your fear? Your anxiety?
  + Doesn’t the idea of sin crouching like a lion waiting to jump on you bring about uncertainty.
    - Can you imagine if I told you, “Go for a walk in the park, and at some point, a lion is going to jump out to eat you…but don’t worry…just DO WELL. Overpower it.
  + That is uncertainty. You never know when he is going to strike.
  + And its powerlessness…He’s a lion…and I’ve got...what…pepper spray?
  + This is impossible. You can’t possibly overcome that kind of power…that kind of darkness…unless
  + **[PAUSE]…you have a God who will fight for you.**
  + But look what Peter says in the 2 verses right before the warning about that deadly, lying adversary.
  + **1 Peter 5:6-7**
  + **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**
  + Humble yourself….get silent…and in the face of lies…remember the promise that’s true. Your God with a mighty hand…will fight for you.
  + And in the face of that power…your anxieties will shrivel up like the darkness at dawn …and if you know the gospel…you know he cares for you.
  + **Luke 1:69, 77-79**
  + Because the gospel is that the meek and mild Baby born in a dark, damp cave on that not-so-silent night would grow up to live the life you and I are supposed to live… …a life free from sin…HE WOULD DO WELL…
  + …yet, he would die a painful death on a cross…Devoured by OUR crouching sin.
  + The Lion that was supposed to devour me and you, devoured Christ.
  + …but then…like the morning sun…he would rise from the darkness…and for those who are listening…you’ll hear him calling you, out of your darkness of sin and death and pain…and we will all rise again with him.
  + Now, I told you Jesus is a bull. He’s not just a suffering savior. He’s also the God who fights for you.
  + See the horn of salvation in v 69? That's not a shofar. Its not that Kenny G was playing his Christmas album when Jesus was born.
  + That's the powerful horn of a raging bull. The kind that with a simple nod of his head can kill a Satanic lion. Which is exactly what he did he rose from the dead.
  + God hasn’t left you alone. He hasn’t let silence and darkness in to punish you…but to cause you to better see the bull that is saving you.
  + The only question is…after you question God…Are you willing now to shut up, start listening to his promises…and see him…in a manger, on a cross, resurrecting…and now seated at the right hand of the Father…FIGHTING FOR YOU?
* I want to end with a little word picture from John Piper that I ran across a few years ago. My prayer is that it sticks in your mind much longer than presents, or tinsel, or Santa Claus does.
  + **Satan may be a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, but none of those who take refuge in Christ, the horn of our salvation, can he destroy. If I were an artist, I would paint for my home a special Christmas painting this year and hang it on the wall near the manger scene. It would be one of those big oil canvasses. The scene would be of a distant hill at dawn. The sun is about to rise behind the hill and the rays shoot up and out of the picture. And all alone, silhouetted on the hill in the center of the picture, very dark, is a magnificent wild [bull] standing with his back seven feet tall and the crown of his head nine feet tall. On both sides of his head there is a horn curving out and up six feet long and twelve inches thick at the base. He stands there sovereign and serene, facing the southern sky with his massive neck slightly cocked, and impaled at the end of his right horn hangs a huge lion, dead.- John Piper**, http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/jesus-is-the-horn-of-salvation