

Text: Zechariah 9:9-10

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Prayer of the Day:

We praise you, O God, for the great acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son, Jesus Christ. As he was acclaimed by those who scattered their garments and branches of palm in his path, so may we always hail him as our King and follow him with perfect confidence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!

Verse of the Day:

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (John 12:23 cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

So it's Holy Week. This is one of my favorite times of the year. The kids parade in with palms. We gather to partake of the meal of our Lord on the night upon which it was instituted for us. We contemplatively assemble in silence on the day our Savior died. And then, and then as if we have sprung from the pit of death itself, Easter morning with the flowers and the breakfast and the choirs and the ... the ... but then it doesn't look like any of that is happening this year. Instead, the Corona Virus has imposed its will upon society. It's made a mess of pretty much everything ... just find an eighth grader, a high school or college senior, a business owner, or a doctor and ask them. It would seem perhaps like a good a proper time to pout, to flail our arms in a good old fashioned hissy fit and just tally up our losses, as world citizens battling an unseen foe, as Christians robbed of our greatest moments of celebration, as human beings who just want to get back to well, being. But today, I would propose a far different reaction to all of this. It's why we are focusing on the words of our God spoken through His prophet Zechariah, who reminds us even as he reminds Israel, *Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!* **REJOICE ... REALLY!**

The connection between our Old Testament lesson and Palm Sunday couldn't be clearer, could it? In our lesson today Zechariah announces this very day in the history of salvation. *Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.* The KING comes! With Him comes righteousness and victory for God's people. He will come in on a donkey. In the Hebrew it actually reads upon a donkey, a young male-donkey, the son of a female donkey. Do you think Zechariah is trying to emphasize something?

Yet the donkey is a strange kind of ride for this King. Year after year it's emphasized as a humble ride. It's not the muscular and massive war horse meant to intimidate and frighten into submission. It's barely broken, if at all, an animal of service and humility. Interestingly enough, what was it Paul told the Philippians today, [Christ Jesus] *being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.* ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross* (Philippians 2:6-8)!

Did you catch that last part? Jesus isn't riding in to secure an easy life in this world. He is not riding in for the pomp and praise, although it does fulfill the scriptures. He is riding in for a cross. He rides in that he might suffer and die for us.

You see that's what we really need. He comes riding in for you, for me. He comes for the worry that is caused by finances which betrays a lack of trust in the loving hands of God. He comes for the sins of selfishness which fray relationships and destroy marriages. He comes for the sickness and the death, a consequence of sin ever plaguing our world. He comes for those who are bullied as well as the bullies who plague them and yeah even for the world which attacks us even as it attacked him.

He comes in deep humility. Willing to set aside the power and the glory which rightfully belongs to him for a crown of thorns, the sting of whips and the piercing pain of nails. So, *Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

Unexpected, you bet! I could understand if Jesus would come in power to wipe us out. It is after all what our sin has earned for itself. There's even a part of me that sinfully wants my Savior to return in judgment on my enemies, as if I have it all figured out. But to come like this, it's unexpected even though it is foretold not only by Zechariah but by prophet after prophet for countless generations. But thanks be to God that **YOUR KING COMES TO YOU** because he brings a message worth rejoicing over.

Not only does he come to free us from sin, oh this would be enough mind you, he comes to give us, peace in all those trials and tribulations as well. You might even say he comes to remove them all although not just yet. There will be a day when the donkey is no longer necessary. On this day, He will come as described in the book of Revelation. ¹¹ *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.* ¹² *His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.* ¹³ *He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.* ¹⁴ *The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.* ¹⁵ *Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter."* *He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.* ¹⁶ *On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Zechariah describes his work, *I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.* On that great last day, when the KING is revealed to the nations and to peoples of all times, sin and the consequences of it will be gone. The days which force tears from our eyes and the need for weapons to protect families and nations will cease. Pandemic and the pandemonium it can cause will be eradicated. That's right sin and it's consequences cannot win even though the death toll is 100% and why?

It all is won as we watch over the next week. That ride in on the donkey begins to set it all into motion. In humility, He will even die that His perfect life and His innocent death would cover us, purchase us for Him. Easter will be our proof.

But the, did you notice how His reign will be accomplished? Chariots and war horses, battle bows shatter as our King proclaims peace. For even now, that proclamation of peace is heard in the Gospel. While the Spirit strengthens faith, He does more than assure you, He actually gives you forgiveness, life and salvation. Destroying the enemy of sin that rages within, and strengthening us for the fight that rages around us, until the day when we struggle no more.

I suppose it would be easy to pout and through the mother of all hissy fits as we look at all we cannot do these days. But then, it was never really about any of that after all. It's about the truth they proclaimed, a truth that is still proclaimed even if it has to take to the internet, or discussed with at least 6 feet in between us. it's not about the palms, or even the kids, the awesome services or the flowers and meals. Its really about the one on the donkey, the one washing feet and hosting the meal, the one on the cross and the one who is missing in the tomb. You see Jesus is the reason Zechariah could say it to Israel as they struggled to rebuild their society after the return from captivity and He's the reason we can shout it out today, **REJOICE!! ... REALLY!!! Amen!**