

Rejoice! Your King Comes!

Palm Sun. – 03/24/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Zechariah 9:9-12 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 9, [Literal translation] **“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Pay attention, your King comes for your benefit. Righteous and saved is He, humble and mounted upon a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”**

Introduction

✘ It is the 6th century BC; more than 500 years before Jesus rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the people’s shouts of “Hosanna”; “save us Lord”. And yet Yahweh’s prophet Zechariah records the text we have here today, for those living in the same place – “Zion”; where the Temple sits; in the midst of “Jerusalem”. And while the nations threatening harm upon them may be different, they are both a people struggling in the midst of bondage; with enemies either surrounding them, as was the case at the time of this Old Testament Reading or occupying and ruling over them, as was the case at the time of our Gospel Reading.

➔ And people in the despair of bondage have two primary questions about the God that they worship. First, does God have the power to free us? And second, is God compassionate enough to free us? In other words, does He care enough about us to want to save us?

✘ Well, here in Zechariah, chapter 9, the prophet answers both questions about our God, Yahweh, with a resounding yes! And He charges His people – including you and me today, who are surrounded every day by the enemies of sin, death and the devil; who are even occupied at times with the evil thoughts of desire, greed, anger and control, as well as the oppressive emotions of jealousy, envy, grief and sadness – He charges His people to “Rejoice greatly!”; to “Shout aloud!”; to “pay attention” because “your King comes for you benefit” (v.10).

➔ That’s an important point for believers in Zechariah’s time, Jesus’ time and our time today to understand. He doesn’t come to us because we deserve His presence and work in our lives, quite the opposite. Because we are steeped every day in sin, what we actually deserve is the eternal torment of hell. Nor does He come because we can command Him to come into our lives. He’s the one who is God; who is all-powerful; who created us, not the other way around. So why...why does He come? Because we need Him and because He loves us in spite of our rebellion and sin. He comes “for our benefit!”

✘ This promise from Yahweh is quite the promise then, isn’t it? For a god who is powerful but not loving would have little concern for us. And a god who is loving but not powerful would not have the ability to help us. But our God, Yahweh is both almighty and immeasurable in His love for us!

➔ And we see that in the distinct characteristics of the King that is promised to be imminently coming for our benefit here in this morning’s text. So “rejoice greatly”, my dear Christians! “Shout aloud” believers in Jesus! For Yahweh declares to you today that your King...your King is “righteous...saved...humble” and victorious!

✘ Martin Luther says of this text, “Here there is no violence, no armor, no power, no anger, no wrath. All these, you see, are proper for kings of this world. Here there are only kindness, justice, salvation, mercy and every good thing” (AE 20:94).

I. Your King is Righteous

✘ So first, in verse 10, Zechariah says that your King is “righteous”. This is an attribute of Yahweh Himself. Isaiah 45:21 says that He is “a righteous God and Savior.” So this King comes to rule on Yahweh’s behalf. It means that He is upright, fair, and shows the highest integrity in all things.

→ Throughout history, this has not been a characteristic of earthly kings. Instead they more often have judged with favoritism; treating even their own subjects unfairly and have ruled with deception and corruption.

✘ But both the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:11 and the promised Branch from David in Jeremiah 23:5, both which are descriptions of this same King here are said to be “righteous” as well.

→ Yes, this righteous King’s chief concern is not for Himself, but to deliver weak and needy people, like and you and me, into Yahweh’s care and name.

II. Your King is Saved

✘ The second characteristic of our coming King in verse 10 is that He is “saved”. Literally, the Hebrew says, “saved is He”. This is different than many of the English translations that have different variations on “having salvation”. The tense of the Hebrew participle (Niphal) has a passive nature to it, meaning that the king needs and receives Yahweh’s help in “being saved”.

→ This verb is used in the same sense in Psalm 33:16 that says, “The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.” We know that Jesus willingly submitted His will to the Father’s plan, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and giving His life over to Yahweh, “not as I will, but as You will” (Mt. 26:39), Jesus prayed.

→ In fact, Jesus’ description in Isaiah 52 and 53 as the Suffering Servant is dominated by these passive verbs. Listen to all that was done to Jesus: “He was despised” (Is. 53:3); “He was wounded...He was crushed” (Is. 53:5); “He was oppressed...He was afflicted” (Is. 53:7); “He was taken away...He was cut off from the land of the living” (Is. 53:8); and “He was numbered with the transgressors” (Is. 53:12).

✘ You see, what makes this King unique from all other kings is that He is righteous and He is saved by Yahweh, and as we’ll see in just a bit, His victory comes not by His powerful army of angels nor by His godly nature within the Trinity, but by being “stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted” (Is. 53:4). This is a radically different King indeed!

III. Your King is Humble / bringing Peace

✘ This leads us right into the third crucial characteristic of your coming King. Verse 9 says He is “humble” and verse 10 says He brings “peace to the nations”. This is drastically different from what the people in Zechariah’s day, as well as the people at the time that Jesus rode into Jerusalem thought they needed from God. And the people of our day are no different either.

→ They wanted a king riding in on a battle horse, ready to engage in military power and might; to destroy their surrounding enemies; to dispel Caesar and his Roman soldiers. People today look for leaders who can crush those whom they believe are keeping them from their “rights”, if not by legal means, then by physical force. “Yes boss, fire my opponent.” “Yes judge, throw my annoying neighbor in jail.” “Yes teacher, send him/her to the principal’s office.” “Yes, Mister President, tax them ‘till they quit” or “send the military and bomb them into submission” or “sign that law that means I can do and think and say whatever it is that I want; that means they can’t do what they want.”

✘ But Zechariah says that your coming King is “humble and mounted on a donkey” (v.9). Verse 10 says that Yahweh will cut off chariots and horses, along with the war bow; that the coming King needs no armor or weapons of any kind. Yahweh already set the precedent for this kind of radical rule earlier in Zechariah 4:6 when He told Israel’s governor Zerubbabel that they didn’t need to fear their enemies while they rebuilt the Temple and Jerusalem’s walls. He said they had no need of weapons because He, God would protect them “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Yahweh almighty”.

- Throughout Jesus' ministry on earth, the Bible emphasizes His gentle and humble spirit. In Matthew 11:29, He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am humble and lowly in heart...". He directed the disciples to "let the little children come" to Him (Mt. 19:14) and said in Matthew 20:26 that "whoever would be great among you must be your servant."
- ✘ Yes, this is the King, verse 10 says, that "shall speak peace to the nations" and in this way, "His rule shall be from sea to sea...from the River to the ends of the earth." Wow! This is not how most people think of a King becoming "ruler of the entire world", is it? And yet this is what you and I are promised regarding our King today.
 - Really, we shouldn't be surprised though, should we? After all, the angels sang at Jesus' birth to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth" has now come in the baby born in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:14). And then, just before He died Jesus said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn. 14:27).
 - Paul talks to the reason why this is so important in Colossians 1:20 when he says, that God reconciles all things on earth and in heaven to Himself "through Jesus...making peace by the blood of His cross."
- ✘ And now today friends, you and I see God deliver that peace that Jesus' blood has bought directly into our lives; into our hearts and minds in concrete; specific ways: in the Absolution when God speaks through your pastor and says, "I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of ✠ the Son and of the Holy Spirit"; in the water and word of your baptism, applied in the same Triune name; in the Lord's Supper where He feeds you His true body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins.
 - Yes, here today God begins to put broken people back together as Jesus brings the peace "that surpasses all human understanding" (Phil. 4:7) into people's hearts all around the world.

IV. Your King is Victorious

- ✘ This is your King dear people of Zion; of Jerusalem; of Jesus Christ! Yes, He is the one riding in victory on His way to be crowned on that day that we know of as Palm Sunday. Yet His crown, as the Bible has taught us, would be made of thorns. His throne would be a wooden instrument of execution.
 - Sadly, the Jewish leaders and the people did not recognize this Jesus as their promised King from God. They rejected their King as well as the peace that He offered for their souls. They couldn't accept the idea of a righteous, saved, humble and peace-bringing King because their eyes and minds were blocked by expectations of power and violence and earthly glory.
- ✘ Yet, just as verse 11 promised, Jesus, your King is the one who is victorious, as He says, "because of the blood of My covenant with you". Jesus even pointed to the fact that His death would fulfill God's covenant when He instituted the Lord's Supper, holding up the cup and saying, "this is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt. 26:28, Mk. 14:24, Lk. 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25).
 - Yes, it is by His blood, given and shed on the cross in our place that the promises in verses 11 and 12 of our text have become your reality and mine right now. He has set you and me as "prisoners" in the "waterless pit" of sin and death entirely free! As Paul says in Colossians 1:13-14, "[The Father] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." And as Revelation 1:5 declares, Jesus "has freed us from our sins by His blood."
 - So that, according to Roman 10:9, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." You see, in your

place, God “raised” or “saved” your King and now as the King of the World He saves you and me and all who believe in Him alone.

✘ We need nothing else. Not more effort. Not more work. Not more sweat and blood because the sweat and blood of Jesus have already been poured out on the cross...for you; for me!

➔ Yes, your King...my King; Jesus loves you and me. He forgives us; heals us and empowers us.

✘ Jesus gives you and me and all believers lasting freedom. How can you be sure? The tomb is empty. Christ is alive. There were eyewitnesses. There is a written record, where the King Himself gives His Word in John 8:36, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” Amen.