

Palm Sunday (April 5, 2020)

1846

O. T. Lesson: Zechariah 9:9-10

Morning Praise: p. 45

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11

Psalm 24

Text: Zechariah 9:9-10

Theme: Rejoice In Your King.

- I. He is righteous and having salvation.
- II. He is humble and riding on a donkey.
- III. He will proclaim peace to the nations.

May the God of peace fill you with all joy in believing!

Zechariah 9:9-10 Here we have the clear Old Testament prophecy of the coming of Zion's King. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he very clearly demonstrated that he is this King.

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. 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.

Dear daughters of Zion; daughters of Jerusalem, people who have longed for the salvation of our God;

Lent is an emotional rollercoaster. Our feelings are carried up and down, and up and down. Our sins are displayed clearly before our eyes. That fills our hearts with grief approaching despair. Then we see that heavy load of sin lifted from our backs. That fills us with the greatest of joy. But we also see the most bitter pain and grief ever suffered, and suffered by the innocent Son of God on our behalf. That again fills us with deep sorrow. We sing those sad, slow Lenten hymns, but the words are a message of triumph. Sometimes we hardly know whether we are going up or down on that rollercoaster. Think of our term: "Good Friday." Was it good? It was the saddest day in history when our Savior died, and at the same time it was the greatest day, because of what he did for us. We wonder: Should we be happy, or should we be sad? Should we smile; or should we frown? Should we rejoice, or should we mourn? On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we hit the bottom of that rollercoaster, and feel intensely that emotional low. But then on Easter, all gloom and sadness is removed, and we are filled with the greatest of joy.

Palm Sunday falls near the end of Lent, right before Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, in the midst of the Lenten gloom and doom. Yet the message of this day is "rejoice!" "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout for joy, daughter of Jerusalem. See, your king comes to you." Rejoice In Your King! He is righteous and having salvation. He is humble and riding on a donkey. He will proclaim peace to the nations.

All through the Lenten season, the altar paraments are purple, the color that we use to symbolize repentance over our sins. Purple is significant today for another reason. It's the royal color, meant to draw our attention to Christ as our King. As King, he is righteous and having salvation.

If you had to choose a king, what kind of a king would you choose? We do choose an earthly leader when we cast our votes in the presidential election. We look for a candidate with an honorable life, a righteous person. We would hardly vote for someone who is disreputable. If someone cannot rule his own life decently, he certainly

cannot rule a country decently. Sometimes in this sinful world we aren't granted a very good choice. And we look for someone who is capable, capable of ruling justly, capable of bringing justice or righteousness to the nation. Not just someone with good intentions, but someone who is able to make those good intentions a reality.

Righteousness is the number one quality of a king or leader. But from all the mud-slinging and so on that goes on during the campaigns, from the media coverage of presidents and royal families, it becomes quite evident that there is no earthly ruler who is perfectly righteous.

Still, our prophecy tells us, "See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation." That righteous King, of course, is Jesus, who lived a perfect life, totally absent of any sin. He did all things well. There was plenty of mud-slinging that went on during holy week, but all those charges against him were false.

Jesus is righteousness personified, and more than that, his righteousness overflows to us. He also comes, having salvation, with salvation in himself for us. Talk about a capable ruler; Jesus is totally capable. He's not just someone with good intentions; Jesus carries out righteousness, rules in absolute justice and salvation. He single-handedly rids his kingdom of all injustice from within and without. The injustice from within is sin. Sin is left to have no reign in Christ's kingdom. God has taken sin from us, and nailed it to the cross in Christ Jesus himself. The injustice from without is caused by the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, Satan and his followers, and the wicked people of this world. Christ protects us from them through his word, and finally, delivers us from them completely for all eternity in heaven.

Christ is our king not because we chose him, but because God, in infinite love, sent him to us. "See, your King comes to you." He comes for your benefit, to bring you salvation.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he didn't look like much of a king, not from an earthly standpoint. He was humble and riding on a donkey. Kings are distinguished. In Jesus' day, they did not ride on donkeys. Kings rode on horses, big, beautiful horses. But a small and lowly animal best suited the purposes of Jesus. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey, with its mother following behind.

This was Jesus' royal march, when he rode into Jerusalem to establish his kingdom. But Jesus proceeded in all humility and lowliness. Even more than that, he came like a slave. He was miserable, bowed down and full of suffering. On Palm Sunday this perhaps was not so evident. But where was he marching? To the cross, where he would establish his kingdom. As we go through this week, to Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we see very clearly how humble our king was.

Worldly kings establish their kingdoms with great earthly power and glory. They bravely march into battle, with a great army, with a whole country cheering them on. But Jesus did not need earthly power and glory to establish his kingdom. He needed no fiery charger. He didn't need a vast army. Rather he needed humiliation, to humble himself and become obedient to death--even death on a cross! Christ had all power and glory. Even as he suffered and died, he was still the Son of God. But that power and glory was hidden deep within him until Easter morning. That was the challenge of Jesus. That's what it means that he was obedient to death. He didn't make use of his power and glory. He didn't come down from that cross. Rather he made himself to be helpless, and allowed himself to become an object of shame.

Christ established his kingdom with the fiercest battle ever fought; a battle against sin, against death, against Satan and all the powers of darkness, a battle with no truce, a

battle to the finish. Jesus won that battle, not with might, not with power, but with humility, allowing himself to be overcome and crucified.

That's not the kind of king the people of Jerusalem were hoping for. They wanted just a regular king of earthly power and glory. It was with that false earthly hope that many of them lined the streets shouting, and laying palm branches down before Jesus. But Jesus vividly carried out the description of Zechariah's prophecy, and rode humbly on a donkey. By doing this, Jesus was telling the people that he was that King foretold by the prophets, not a king of earthly power, but one who would establish his kingdom in lowliness, through suffering and death, as the prophets had so clearly described the coming Savior. The people didn't understand these things, and by the end of the week they had rejected Jesus and shouted, "Crucify him!" Unbelievers today still laugh at the way Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Unbelief cannot understand the lowliness of Christ.

Even Jesus' own disciples at the time did not understand why Jesus needed those donkeys, and why he rode into Jerusalem in such a humble way. But after Jesus' resurrection, they did understand their humble Savior. And we understand him. Therefore we have a far greater reason than the crowds of Jerusalem to sing "Hosanna," praise and glorify him; because we understand that in humility Christ carried out the greatest feat in history and won our salvation.

That salvation is described for us in the message that Christ proclaims. "He will proclaim peace to the nations." Christ's kingdom described in one word is: "peace."

Although the donkey on which Jesus rode was first and foremost an illustration of humility; it also serves to remind us of peace. As a rule, donkeys were not used for war; horses were. Donkeys were a peace-time animal, used for work in the country, and for common everyday transportation. There is no purpose for war-horses and chariots in Jesus' kingdom. He says, "I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken." An earthly kingdom without weapons of destruction has never existed, and could never exist. But that's what Christ's kingdom is all about; no weapons of destruction, only peace and salvation. Christ's kingdom is carried out and maintained not with worldly weapons, but with the gospel, his word, the message of peace. This is a peace far greater than any worldly definition of peace. This is a peace between sinners and God, because the hostility of sin has been removed on the cross.

And this peace will be proclaimed to the nations, peace to all mankind, because Christ has taken away the sin of all. "His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the river (the Euphrates, the boundary line and starting point) to the ends of the earth." Christ's crucifixion did not take place in secret. Rather it took place just outside Jerusalem, a city packed with people from many places, gathered for the Passover; in the middle of Israel, in the middle of the Roman Empire, in the middle of the world, in the middle of time, the middle of the history of the world we might even say. That message of peace has been proclaimed the world over. And wherever that gospel is proclaimed, people are brought into Christ's kingdom. His rule extends even to this place, and to our individual homes, where we now celebrate Holy Week.

Rejoice in your king. Rejoice because he is righteous, and he has made his righteousness your own, giving you salvation. To do that, he went humbly to the cross. And the peace he won there, he has proclaimed to you, that he might reign in your heart. Our Palm Sunday prayer is the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come." Christ, come and rule in our hearts for all eternity.

Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.