

Palm Sunday

March 20, 2016

Prayer of the Day: We praise you, O God, for the great acts of love by which you 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.

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

Sermon Text: Zechariah 9:9-10

Do you have a clearer picture of who the two major presidential candidates will be? [I believe] Two Democratic candidates remain and the Republican field is narrowed down to three. Certainly a few more campaigns will be suspended and others ramped up. Campaigns seem to thrive or end because of one thing people are looking for one major thing in a President[ial leader]. You probably already know what that one thing is. It may be more important than a political party platform. It is more important than personal political experience. It may be even more important than campaign promises. People want a leader who can relate to them. Someone who understands the challenges found in normal every day in life. Someone who recognizes problems seen in grocery stores, gas stations, and doctor offices. Someone who not just identifies problems, but who works to make life better (or at least ensure life will be fine). So, will the next leader say, promise, and then give the help you want this November?

Maybe a more realistic question is: Can one single leader meet everyone's needs? Whoever votes for the losing candidate might be left feeling that their concerns are not heard and their needs are not met. Also, not everyone in the nation has the exact same needs for the leader to address. Pondering that may leave you dreading what is to come.

In a world where so many continue searching for peace— and more than that— personal peace, **REJOICE AND SHOUT!** *Your King comes to you and your King proclaims peace.*

Do you really feel like doing that today? **REJOICING AND SHOUTING?** Is there even much to rejoice or shout about? Of course, I am not suggesting that you never have a reason to rejoice or cheer— that life hands you just one misery after another. Certainly life

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.

gives you many joys: your children and grandchildren, vacations, freedom with friends and hobbies, little personal accomplishments; these things bring happiness.

Yet, under all those joys rest the reminder that life does carry challenges. Recent polls reveal something that is really no secret: fewer and fewer people care to know who God is, what he has done for them, and why he matters right now in their life. Opponents fight to limit your religious freedom by trying to pass laws on what you can and cannot say about your faith. Sometimes you may even dig into your personal life and wonder where God meets you— or if you even need God to meet you at all.

Those challenges may appear to be steady constants, a kind of struggle that is and always will be there. That when you start feeling one issue is getting better, another one seems to be getting worse. That you see God's healing hand in your life, but you wonder where his power is in the world. Or you rejoice at the sight of those worshipping with you, but you are painfully reminded that there were others who used to worship with you. Life is full of joys, but ever-present challenges may not provide much reason to **REJOICE AND SHOUT!**

That is the reason Zechariah brings this prophecy in the first place. God sends him to the Old Testament nation of Judah. Life was challenging for them. You see, the nation of Judah had been destroyed and millions were forced to live in the nation of Babylon. After seventy years of captivity, God led them back to their old native land. That was good; they could rule themselves again. Yet, this once great nation now stood as a pale image of what they once were. Millions used to live in the country, but now about 42,000 people live there ([Ezra 2:64](#)). Streets once bustled with people, but now stood the frames of burned down homes and businesses. The towering temple of glistening white stone and its inside walls of pure gold is now just a pile of rubble. These challenges did not give much reason to rejoice.

On top of that, some of those believers slowly stopped coming to worship ([Zechariah 1:2-6](#)). Fewer and fewer people cared to know what God did for them, and instead devoted more time to building their homes ([Haggai 1:2-4](#)). Some were building a temple, but enemies from other nations tried to stop them. They used political power and physical force to slow down the building ([Nehemiah 4:1-23](#)). Life was full of joys, but ever-present challenges left them wondering where God met them in their lives.

When you look at the challenges confronting your daily life and your spiritual life, sometimes it might feel like God is that leader who makes great promises, but never carries through on them. Or that he says he can relate to you, but really does not know what your life is like. So, it becomes easy to stop **REJOICING AND SHOUTING** because your King seems so distant and removed! How easy to stop **REJOICING AND SHOUTING** because your King appears untrustworthy! How easy to stop **REJOICING AND SHOUTING** when life is spent trying to find true peace in a place without God!

You see, Zechariah gives this prophecy to encourage you, to restore your hopes. Even right now in this world, in this life, in your life, *Your King comes to you*. 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.** The gospel reading is the fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus rides into

Jerusalem on the back of a young donkey—once again proving that he is God’s promised Son.

Yet, do you see the one thing that connects this prophecy to you? It is easy to pass right over the words. Listen again: **Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you...** Your leader, your King, has you in mind. He comes to meet you and your needs. Nothing is going to stop him. Your King will not forever lie in the manger. Your King will not forever stand among the crowds or teach the disciples or sit in the upper room. God sends your King to *“Ride on, Ride On, in majesty... to die... to triumph o’er captive death and conquered sin* (Christian Worship Hymnal, #133). This is how much Jesus your King loves you.

In love, the King of creation lays aside heaven’s crown and steps off from his throne. He is born not to kings, but to the virgin Mary. Jesus does not determine which commandments he will and will not obey. Instead, he willingly places himself under the law of God. Like you, Jesus confronts temptations, but never once falls into sin. He remains sinless, perfect, righteous for you.

Then he suffers under Pontius Pilate— a man the Creator knit together in the womb. He is crucified. The Life-Giver loses his life for you. What king would give his life for the guilty citizen? What king would lay aside his crown, leave his heavenly palace, and walk out to suffer for your crimes against God, so that you, his citizen, might live? Only Jesus, your eternal King.

REJOICE AND SHOUT! because your King rides into Jerusalem for your benefit, for your need! **REJOICE AND SHOUT!** because your King gives his life on the cross to save you. **REJOICE AND SHOUT!** *Your King comes to you!*

Your King proclaims peace. The people of Judah watched mighty nations flaunt their strength. Those nations had armies, governments, economies, masses of people. Judah grew discouraged because they did not have that same security— and did not know if God would give them that security. Their eyes remained focused on earthly things. So, Zechariah lifts up eyes to a King greater than any other king, to a King whose kingdom has and will last longer than any other kingdom, to a King who brings comfort.

**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.**

Your King brings peace. He does not need chariots, war-horses, or battle bows. He has already won peace by his death on the cross. He offers himself to suffer for all the times we challenge God’s love for us. His life is enough to make you able to stand before God.

You have that peace in your life right now. Yes, you currently live in this world. You have joys in your children and grandchildren, freedom with friends, and in meeting life-goals. Yet, even when challenges rear their ugly head at you, you have this constant comfort of peace with God. This is your reason to **REJOICE AND SHOUT!**

You have a fully restored relationship with God right now—and you continually are reminded about it. In our liturgy, when do you hear that your sins are forgiven? Only after you pay attention to the lessons and sermon, sing hymns, and give your offering? No! You hear peace given to you at the beginning of service. You hear how you can remain in God's presence because he has forgiven your sins!

You see the baptismal font— front and center; you see the sign of the cross made. That cross pictures the cross on which Jesus died to remove your sins. When you see the sign of the cross made, you are reminded Jesus' death was done to forgive you. That font will forever remain a place where Jesus points and says that your sins are washed away.

You receive the Lord's Supper— where Jesus assures and reassures you that you are forgiven. He gave his body and blood to death. Because he did that, you are at peace with God.

You leave this house with God's blessing. You know that he smiles on you, is gracious to you, does bless you with his favor. He is not angry with you; he is not out to afflict you or get revenge on you. No, you have the peace of knowing God loves you. *Your King proclaims peace.*

Even in the face of life's challenges, you continue holding this peace. When a loved one passes away, you have the peace of knowing that they live with Jesus. This is certain— not a hope, dream, desire. The peace comes from God's crystal clear words to you. When troubles rage in the world, you have the peace of knowing that God still hears your prayers and answers you. He gives you what you need at the proper time. He gives you things better than we could ever imagine. When family fights and seems to be at odds, draw from the peace with your God. Strive to forgive others just as God forgave you. Continue reflecting the true, lasting peace you have found with the Almighty.

After all, how many people know of this peace in life? How many stand unshaken, unmoved, unnerved by events happening in our world? Do you know people who search for true peace in the government? Or try to find life's most fulfilling peace in family or bank accounts or personal goals? When you turn on the news and you listen to people talk, do you get the sense that they know Jesus is King? These things might offer glimpses of peace, but they each leave you wanting more. Not to mention, none of them brings the lasting peace which goes through the grave. As believers, God has given you this privilege to carry his rule from sea to sea, from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth!

So, **REJOICE AND SHOUT!** just like you hear in sport stadiums. Cheer on the Savior as he sets out to accomplish his work. Not that Jesus needs our praise to save us. Rather, your cheering comes because of what he sets out to do. All the prophecies of God find fulfillment in him. The Righteous Branch of David, the Son of the virgin, the promised Seed has come and has come for one purpose: to save you.

As believers today, you can look back and see how Jesus has made you ready to stand before God. You also look forward to the day when he comes to save you to his side for all eternity. **REJOICE AND SHOUT!** because Jesus *Your King comes to you* and *Your King proclaims peace.*