

This is the Day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen!

⁹Rejoice greatly, Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your King is coming to you. He is righteous and brings salvation. He is humble and is riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. The battle bow will be taken away, and he will proclaim peace to the nations. His kingdom will extend from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth.

This is God's Word.

Dear Friends,

Intro: Do you like parades? I think most people do. The 4th of July parade is a good example – it happens every year and before the parade people are already marking off their seats so that they can get a good view of the parade. And it's a wonderful celebration and everyone has fun. The portion of scripture before us today is about a parade. Zechariah was prophesying about this parade that would happen in the future and our Gospel lesson describes this parade that took place 530 years after Zechariah wrote about it.

Jesus was the main attraction of the parade. How do you think he felt on that day as he rode into Jerusalem? The people were cheering and yelling and things seemed to be going well. Do you think Jesus had a smile on his face? Jesus knew what would happen later in the week, but I think as he rode into Jerusalem on that 1st Palm Sunday, he was smiling because the people were rejoicing. They were rejoicing because they recognized Jesus as their king even though they really didn't understand what that meant. As we consider the words of Zechariah we will see that, **“Jesus is our King.”** He comes, **“With Humility as a Righteous King,”** and **“Brings Salvation as a Powerful King.”**

I. When Zechariah wrote these words, the people of Judah were feeling pretty down and they needed some encouragement. The year was about 520 B.C. The people had returned from the Babylonian captivity and were back home. You would think they should be happy but they weren't. Jerusalem and the magnificent temple Solomon had built lay in ruins. This had been God's special city for his people and the temple had been their place of worship. Would they ever get it rebuilt? At the rate they were going, maybe not. Apathy had set in and the people needed a boost.

That's why Zechariah tells them to **“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!”** He's not only saying, “Feel happy,” he's telling the people to express their happiness. To leap for joy. To dance in a wild manner. To shout like you shout at a basketball or football game when it's close. On your feet and in a way that when the day ends you are hoarse. And then he says we have all the reason to rejoice because the King is coming.

Right about this time the people might be thinking, “A King. Maybe that's a good thing. We need a strong leader. Someone to fight for us and protect us and take care of us and lead us.” But as Zechariah spoke these words I'm not sure the people realized that this was something that was going to happen in the future – 500 years in the future.

And then Zechariah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, describes this king: **“Righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** About that time the people might have thought, “Wait a minute. What kind of king is Zechariah talking about? Kings are arrogant and ruthless. Humble kings don’t last very long. And kings ride big white horses, not donkeys. A donkey is a beast of burden – something to carry provisions – not a king. That would be like having the President of the United States riding around in a rusty Ford Escort instead of a special built Cadillac.”

Jesus fulfilled this prophecy almost 550 years after it was made and we often say his chariot was humility. Human nature mistakes humility for weakness but our King, Jesus, was anything but weak. His humility started from the time he was conceived and persisted until his mission was complete. During this period of time our king was not only humble but also righteous.

He was righteous for us by placing himself under the Law to keep it for us perfectly. The Children of Israel had been trying to do that for almost a 1000 years and had never succeeded to meet God’s demand of perfection. But Jesus was able to fulfill that righteous requirement for us throughout his 33 years on this earth. That is an important part of our salvation because Jesus took his righteousness to the cross where he exchanged it for our sins. Through faith we receive his righteousness. Along with righteousness comes the gift of salvation that only our Savior/King can give.

II. Remember God’s promise to Adam and Eve back in the Garden of Eden? I will send you a “Head Crusher.” As Jesus fulfilled Zechariah’s prophecy on Palm Sunday, he rode into town ready to do battle with the serpent. His strength and power weren’t evident but they were there. The people cheered. Here was their Messiah but there was so much they didn’t know about this battle and the way it would be fought. And so on that Palm Sunday the people cheered hoping that Jesus would bring them peace.

Jesus does bring peace. 2000 years ago he fought the greatest battle this world has ever seen. He didn’t use chariots or war-horses or tanks or machine guns or missiles or fighter planes. His weapon was the cross. Simple but effective. It is hard for us to see the battle that was taking place on the cross but for the people who were present it was obvious that something was happening. The sky was darkened – like a full eclipse – for 3 hours, and Jesus cried out in a loud voice, **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”**

Jesus took the weight of our sins on himself and defeated Satan by paying for each one of our sins. Whenever Satan accuses us, we point to Jesus who has already paid the price. Whenever Satan tempts us we point to Jesus who defeated Satan and Satan has to flee. With eyes of faith we see that our Savior/King has won the battle and that changes everything in our lives because we share in that victory through faith.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people cheered. It was a great parade as he prepared for battle. A week later there would be another parade, a victory parade, as Jesus descended into hell and declared his victory over Satan and then rose to assure us of the very same victory so that we can have peace.

Not world peace, but spiritual peace between us and God. So in spite of everything going on in the world around us we can have peace through faith in our Savior. Satan may still try to ambush us, but our Savior has equipped us with his Word which is sharper than any double edged sword.

Listen to the words of Zechariah. Don't be apathetic about your faith – don't take it for granted. Put your faith into action. Rejoice greatly in your salvation! As we journey to the cross with our Savior this week, let us keep our eyes fixed on the cross and remember the parade – a parade that reminds us of our humble Savior who makes us right with God and a parade that reminds us of our powerful Savior who defeated sin, death and Satan for us. Rejoice and shout for joy! Amen.