

Zechariah 9:9,10 ⁹ Rejoice 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. ¹⁰ I 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.

I was just reading about the king of Thailand, Maha Vajiralongkorn. He wanted to isolate himself from the corona virus, so he booked the entire Grand Hotel of some alpine resort village in Germany. It was a big deal, as he moved in with a harem of twenty of his concubines and hundreds of servants and security personnel. Now reactions are mixed, as there are apparently quite a number of people who are very loyal to him; others not as much. And I hear that wife number four is not all that happy about being left behind. I guess that's how it is when a big leader comes to town. Some people are excited and thrilled, others not so much. A few years ago, Pope Francis made a big appearance at the U.N. And even though there were huge crowds of adoring onlookers, it was also a bigtime nightmare for the FBI and the New York Police Department counterterrorism task force. Or think when President Trump makes an appearance – anywhere. He will show up in an impressive entourage of Cadillac One, the Beast, accompanying vehicles and motorcade, and Secret Service agents all over the place. There will be many people cheering and shouting encouragement, honoring at least the position he represents. And, at the same time there will be people demonstrating and shouting profanities, disgusted by the man and anything he attempts to do. And then I suppose there are also a few who couldn't care less either way. All kinds of different reactions. Well, today you and I happen to be situated along a parade route, and we have a front row seat to view the King passing by. The King, who depending on your view of him brings out some really different reactions from different people. But for anyone who really knows who this King, this King of peace is, and what he has to offer, there really is only one possible reaction. God's prophet Zechariah lets us know that that is to REJOICE, literally, "jump for joy." Jump for Joy because this King of Peace, even though he comes humbly, he wins convincingly.

Rejoice, give a blast of victory on the horn, scream, yell, shout for joy. That's what God's prophet was telling God's people. Now, at that time, 500 B.C.-ish, most of the people didn't feel they had too much to celebrate. Yeah, God had come through and had brought them back from exile in the Babylonian Empire. But there were so few of them, and their cities were all ruined and their temple was wrecked and all their enemies seemed so much better off than they were. There didn't seem to be much to rejoice about. But as God's messenger tells them, just look. See the King. Your King. He's coming to give you something to rejoice about. A kingdom so great, so powerful, so glorious. And it will last forever.

But we've seen this king. In fact, we have a better view than the people of Zechariah's day did. And we're not always jumping for joy when we think about King Jesus. As he passes by this morning, and we're like, "Oh, that's nice. Here comes Jesus on a donkey. Why doesn't he at least get a decent-sized horse to ride on? And what's with all those crazy people with the branches?" And why don't we get all excited about this King? I mean, for myself, I'm more likely to get up and jump around and shout at a sporting event, even watching it on t.v. But I can't remember high-fiving someone about Jesus, or screaming uncontrollably about him. Is it because he comes so humbly? That seems to be why the people of his day passed him by.

They thought he'd be bigger. Someone who would annihilate their political enemies. Someone who could make life on this earth so enjoyable they'd never have to worry about food or jobs or getting sick, or their investments. They wouldn't get scared or unhappy anymore. What a disappointment when his hope and change were about spiritual things.

And that's still what disappoints people today. They're concerned about physical things more than spiritual matters. Priorities are all messed up. Once I saw a t-shirt that said, "It's not that life's so short, it's just that you're dead so long." Now I'm pretty sure that guy didn't know how close he was. It is true that life is very short compared to what comes after. It's just that no one stays dead. The eternity that comes after this life is what really matters. But people don't think about that too much. Don't concern themselves all that much with their relationship with God and how that will affect their eternity. That's probably why people are so good at rationalizing their sins. Why putting ourselves first is "my right." And fudging on taxes is shrewd financial strategy. Walking on other people is good business. And addictions are excused because they're just another disease that can't be helped. My verbal abuse is just "blowing off some steam." And sinful pride is called "having a healthy self-esteem." And every little thing is a valid reason for not having time for God and his Word. And that doesn't leave much need for the King whose main job it is to conquer sin.

But if we have even the slightest idea of how critical it is to have a right relationship with the Almighty. How deadly slavery to sin really is. How far away from God any sin puts us. Then we will jump for joy when we see the King of Peace coming. Even if he's not coming in a bullet-proof limo, escorted by tons of secret service agents. Because this king comes very humbly. Here the prophet Zechariah, called the prophet of Holy Week because he's the one who predicted the thirty pieces of silver the Savior would be betrayed for and the potter's field that money would later buy; he's the one who said all the disciples would scatter like sheep when the Savior was arrested and that the Messiah would be executed by being "pierced" – oh, and God had him write it all down more than 500 years before it happened. Well, here he's right on the button with the specifics about what we call Palm Sunday, too. As he tells us this royal entrance wouldn't be like a normal king. This king, the prophet says, would come "humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." And sure enough, five and a half centuries later, the Savior requisitions a donkey colt.

But the lack of a limo, or a Mercedes or even a nice war horse – that doesn't even scratch the surface of his humility. The Bible tells us, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." The Son of God, out of love for sinful humans, became the greatest riches to rags story ever. True God, the one responsible for creating everything, he humbles himself to be conceived in the womb of Mary. Allowed himself to be born a little baby and grow up a child in a poor family. Suffered incredible shame and pain, died, and was buried. This is God we're talking about. No fooling, he came humbly. But don't you be fooled by that lowliness and humility. Make no mistake about this King.

Because he is the King who conquers – convincingly. There was a powerful reason for the Son of God to come down so low. 2 Corinthians 8 tells us, "He became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich." Or as the prophet Zechariah puts it here, "He will proclaim peace to the nations. His kingdom will extend from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth." He might not have looked like much at the time, but this humble man on

the borrowed donkey was on his way to winning the biggest victory of any king ever. He was about to grab the devil by the throat and pound him into submission. He was going to obliterate the guilt of sin. And by the time he was done, even death itself would be waving the white flag of surrender. All that, not by going on a slaughtering rampage, but by dying. By humbly giving himself over to death on the cross, Jesus took away the only weapon the devil had – the rifle of sin he could use to shoot us and kill us all with spiritual and eternal death. But Jesus busted that over his almighty knee and then went and slammed shut the door to hell, and made death look worthlessly weak and silly by walking right out the other side on the first Easter morning.

“Look!” God’s prophet Zechariah says, “Your King is coming to you. He is righteous and brings salvation.” Jesus came riding into town as the only Righteous One. The only one who has ever gone through life without sinning once, without earning the wages of sin. But as he rode into town, he made an amazing switch. We were all standing there wearing the filth of our sins that God hates so much. And Jesus quick hopped off his donkey and traded his spotless, sparkling robe of perfect righteousness for our filth, and then hopped back on the donkey without missing a beat. He kept right on going up the hill of reckoning, and there the offended God of the universe pounded Jesus as if he were us. Meanwhile we escaped. Got off scott free. Jesus paid for every sin he was carrying and all accounts were settled. So where he rode in solo, the only one righteous and having salvation, he came out and we all looked righteous to God, covered by his salvation. And that’s the peace the last part of our text is talking about, that this king would proclaim. The chariots and war horses are gone, the bows are broken. He’s gotten rid of all the weapons. The war is over that otherwise would have ended with the Almighty destroying us. Now there is peace instead. We’re best friends. In the Andes mountains there is a huge statue that was put there at the beginning of the last century. It’s from when the people of Chile and Argentina were at war. They decided to settle their differences and so they melted down their cannons to make this huge statue of Christ. Christ of the Andes they called it, and said, “Christ is our peace.” So the Chileans and the Argentinians weren’t fighting any more. And that’s the same thing the king of peace has done for us with God. Jesus is our peace so we and God aren’t fighting any more.

And that gives us real peace. The peace of our guilt being taken away. And that’s a big one. People go through all kinds of physical, spiritual, emotional contortions to try to make it go away. They’ll try to cover it up with alcohol or drugs or business or trips to the psychiatrist or just denying it and saying it doesn’t exist. But there’s only one thing that works: Jesus. The King of Peace. The Savior who scored the victory over sin and Satan for us. And that makes all the difference. When Zechariah was writing this, his job was to get these people who seemed to have so little evidence for God’s presence to recognize the spiritual and eventually the eternal glory that was theirs. And to rejoice in it. Instead of moaning about their troubles and problems to look up to their King and see that they actually had reason to jump for joy. The victory that explains the seeming contradiction of us Christians too. We feel beat up and confused and frustrated by what is going on around us. But at the same time, we know that we are forgiven; we are back together with God and in his gracious hands; and we hold the final card that trumps them all, eternal life forever. Because our King came so humbly and won so convincingly. Here comes your king. You’ve got every reason to rejoice. Amen.