

March 20, 2005
Palm Sunday

"Rejoice Greatly Your King Is Coming to You"

ZECHARIAH 9:9,10

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.

Amazing! Just amazing! 500 years before it happened the prophet Zechariah predicted the Messiah would come into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, actually the colt of a donkey, not even full grown and mature. He told the people of his time to anticipate this great event by rejoicing greatly.

How do people show their emotions when they rejoice greatly? They may hoot and holler when they are very happy. They may jump up and down. They may slap each other's hands, give each other high fives, hug and kiss each other with joy. The Hebrew word for "rejoice" is "gil." It has the thought of going around in a circle, something that we do when we dance around for joy. Jewish people love to sing the song, "Havnah Nigilah..." which means to dance around for joy oh sons of Israel. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey on the Sunday before he died, large crowds of people welcomed him with shouts of joy and palms branches and clothes. They sang out with words from Psalm 118 "Hosanna. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."

My dear Christian, every day in your life is a day for palms branches, loud hosannas, singing, jumping up and dancing, dancing around in circles for joy because Jesus has come into your life. You did not find him, he found you. He comes every day to serve us with his salvation and bring us a peace that this world cannot give. A bumper sticker once said, "A bad day of fishing is always better than a good day at work." With Jesus there are no bad days whether you are working or having fun or whatever you may be doing. This morning we want to speak to you on this thought from our text, **"Rejoice Greatly, Your King Is Coming to You."**

1) Look at the power Jesus has

Your king comes to you with tremendous power and strength. "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, one colt the foal of a donkey." Just look at Jesus riding into Jerusalem and see his power and strength. See how righteous and holy his life was compared to every other life ever lived by people on this earth.

If you want to have righteousness in your life that makes you acceptable to God you cannot go to the store to buy holiness the way you purchase a gallon of milk. You cannot do a google search on the internet and hope that your search will discover what you need

to be accepted by God. You cannot join a religious commune in Tibet and wear saffron robes to find this holiness. You cannot even be the best that you can be, because even your best and my best will always fall short of God's holiness and perfection. Jesus, only Jesus, riding into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey measured up to his heavenly Father's standard of holiness and perfection.

What amazes us about Jesus is his power to take the holiness he produced in his life and use it to rescue people like us who fall far short of God's standards of holiness and righteousness. Notice the hands of Jesus as they hold onto the donkey, that lowly beast of burden. Those hands are the powerful hands of God who created the world in which we live. Those hands were nailed to the cross for you. Scripture makes it clear that in the wounds of Jesus we have salvation or forgiveness and peace and pardon with our God. Colossians 2 says, "When you were dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins having cancelled the written code that was against us and stood opposed to us, he took it away, nailing it to the cross."

The hands of Jesus, the beautiful hands that held the children, fed the hungry, raised the dead, reached out in love to people, worked in the carpenter's shop are hands that lived a pure and holy life. Psalm 2 says, "Who shall ascend in the hill of the Lord?" The answer: "He that has clean hands and pure heart." Here is a king who can do what no other king in history was able to do. He is able to take the perfect life he lived being fully human and credit this life into your account. The Revelation tells us, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down."

Kings and important people do not ride into a city on lowly donkey. Not only was it a donkey, but the foal of donkey, a lowly beast of burden, that no one had ever ridden before. That was a miracle. The little donkey carries Jesus into Jerusalem, submitting to the need of the Savior without trying to buck him off, or not even lurching and bolting at the noise of a large crowd, or people waving palm branches. How many trained horses have you not seen spooked in a parade? This lowly donkey carried the greatest power in the history of the Lord.

When the Hollywood crowd comes to the Oscars they pull up in big limos with fancy clothes and a red carpet rolled out to welcome them. When Absalom tried to wrest the throne away from his father David he rode in a chariot with warhorses and had 50 people running ahead of him. The Lord never wanted his people to ride into war with chariots and horses. They could walk into battle and they could ride donkeys but not war horses and chariots. Psalm 20 said, "Some trust in chariots and horse but we will trust in the name of the Lord." The people sang the psalm that captured the essence of Jesus' life. "Blessed is he who come in the name of the Lord." Jesus came in the name of his heavenly Father. In the Garden he prayed, "Not my will but yours be done." In Psalm 40 the Messiah joyfully proclaimed, "I have come to do your will O God."

Think of how important it is to have power in your life. You need power to go to work and earn a living. You need power to drive your car. You need power to turn on the lights and run the appliances in your home. Sometimes you find yourself just praying for power to make it through the day or just become a better person. Why do so many people turn on

Oprah? Why are there so many self-help books even in the Christian bookstore? We need power to change our lives, improve ourselves, and make our world a better place to live.

All the power in the world, whether it is electrical, or computer power or financial power, or acceptance by other people, none of it can eradicate one sin I did when I was child, or teen-ager or one sin committed this past week. My greatest need in life is to find a way to erase, expunge, eradicate, and eliminate sin so it will not be held against me on judgment day. That power, that ultimate power, can only be found in Jesus.

There is power in the blood of Christ to cleanse us from all sin. How amazing it is to have access to this power when we take the body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion for the forgiveness of our sins. The greatest sources of power in the world do not compare to the power in the body of Christ and the blood of Christ that is received with the bread and the wine. "Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."

2) Look at the peace he brings

Because Jesus has so much power, and because is able to remove the sin that makes us unacceptable to our God, he is able to bring us a peace this world cannot give. Zechariah describes this peace with these poetic words, "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." The Hebrew word for take away is a very strong word that is usually translated "cut off." It was used to describe the process of circumcision, and also used to describe God punishing people with eternal death by cutting them off forever.

When Jesus comes he will smash to pieces the engines of war. He will cut off he chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem. Wherever the Messiah goes, he brings a peace this world cannot give. The peace of knowing our sins are forgiven gives us power and strength to work at living in peace with people who are around us. Psalm 46 says, "He breaks the bow and shatters the spear and burns the shields with fire." Isaiah pictured this peace as the wolf living with the lion and the lion and ox eating straw together.

In researching this text we discovered one Jewish scholar who said the Christians are totally wrong in applying these words to the Messiah and to Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He claimed that there is no way this can be the Messiah because there is no world peace that extends to the ends of the earth. Agnostic professors tell college students that the Christian faith has contributed to more wars and killings than any other movement in history.

The very opposite is true. When people follow Jesus closely they will work hard at bringing about peace in the world, even it means having to fight against people who are destroying the lives of other people. They will also reflect the peace that Jesus has given to them by living at peace with people who are around them, especially in their own families. 1 Corinthians 13 speaks of this peace when its says, "Love is patient, love is kind...." The nastiest husband in the world, and the meanest wife in the world, and the most horrible kids the world has ever known can learn to live in peace with each other and control their anger and hatred when the love that Jesus has for them begins to fill their lives. Christian

radio speaker Chuck Swindoll once wrote that he wanted to be remembered by his family, not as the man who preached to thousands of people, but the man who threw his wife into the swimming pool with all her clothes on and lived to tell about it.

How true are the words of the hymn written by a man who had just lost his wife and two children to ship wreck at sea. "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul." If the peace that Jesus brings and the power that Jesus has flows like a river even when loved ones are lost, does that same power and peace that we see in Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem also flow into us as we learn to live in peace with those who are around us? Rejoice greatly. Dance around for joy. Sing your hosannas. Lift up your palm branches. Your king is coming to you today, tomorrow and every day for life and someday he will come in clouds of glory, not a lowly donkey. Even so Lord Jesus come quickly. Amen.