

**April 17, 2011
Palm Sunday**

"Dance for Joy! Your King Is Coming!"

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.
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.

If you are part of the so-called "Great Generation" you may remember the celebration that took place in our country when WW2 came to an end. There was dancing in the streets, cars honked their horns and soldiers even kissed girls they had never seen before. I want you to keep this scene of dancing around for joy in your mind. The words just read to you call on us to "rejoice greatly" and shout for joy because our king comes to us riding on a donkey bringing us salvation and a peace this world cannot give. The Hebrew word used here for rejoicing literally means to go around in a circle or to dance around. The Jewish people have a popular song they love to sing at weddings that uses this very word for dancing around for joy. You have heard it I am sure: "Hava Nagilah."

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday it says a large crowd of people spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The people shouted for joy, "Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." They could not contain their joy.

How many times has your king Jesus come to you this past week to remind you of his love for you and the blessings you have with him as your King of kings and Lord of lords? Every day, whether the sun is shining or the skies are gray, we can open the windows and joyfully say with the words of Psalm 118, "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." I saw a bumper sticker that read, "A bad day of fishing is better than a good day at work." With Jesus as your King, there are no bad days whether you are fishing at the office, or sick or feeling well. Put on your dancing shoes. Clear your throat as we join the people of Jerusalem to shout for joy as we welcome Jesus into our lives as our King.

What a king he is!

There is no king in the world like our King Jesus. "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." Don't let your eyes deceive you as you look at your King Jesus riding on a donkey. God's Word tells us that he comes to us righteous and having salvation. These two words "righteous" and "salvation" are two of the most important words in the Bible. I need to be righteous, that means holy and perfect to be accepted by God. Look at Jesus. He comes into Jerusalem as the only righteous person who ever lived on the face of this earth. He was perfect in everything he did. He rides into Jerusalem to offer his righteousness to a world of people who constantly fall short of God's righteousness and God's glory. Romans 3 says, "There is none who is righteous, no not one."

If you want to be righteous before God you cannot go to a store and purchase this righteousness the way you might buy a gallon of milk. You cannot do a Google search on the internet to find this righteousness in some exotic place. You cannot find this righteousness in yourself by doing the best you can because your best will always fall short of God's glory. You can only find this righteousness in Jesus. Isaiah 61 says, "I delight greatly in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God, For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness." Here is that Hebrew word again, the word that literally means, to go around in a circle. There is not a day in our lives when we cannot dance around for joy because of this righteousness that King Jesus brings into our lives. Paul said in Philippians 3 "That I might be found in him, not have a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith,"

Look at Jesus your King. He also brings salvation with him. The crowd on the streets of Jerusalem shouted out "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The word "Hosanna" means "Save us." These words come from Psalm 118 where it says, "O Lord save us; O Lord grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." No one can bless you and save you as Jesus can. One old time evangelist said, "He rescues the guttermost to the uttermost." He takes you from being nothing in the eyes of your God and makes you dearly loved by your heavenly Father. Psalm 103 says it so clearly, "He redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion." Colossians 1:13 says, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." In John 10 where Jesus describes himself as the shepherd who saves the sheep he also says, "I have come that they might have life and have it to the full."

Your king who comes to you is also described as being "gentle." Please don't equate gentleness and meekness with weakness. The night before he died Jesus knelt down and washed the feet of his disciples. Here is Jesus, our Lord and God, the creator of the universe, becoming one of us and bowing down to serve us. Philippians 2 says of Jesus, "He made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross!" The human hands of Jesus that hold on the donkey are the hands of God that created the universe, the hands of God that will be nailed to the cross for our sin.

We dance around for joy this morning because our King came to rescue us. Our King is gentle and our King is all powerful and our King cares about us. Some years ago a very dynamic African American preacher Samuel Lockridge preached a sermon with the theme:

"That's My King." Here is a portion of that sermon.

"My King was born a King. He's the King of the Jews. He is the King of Israel. He is the King of righteousness. He is the King of ages. He is the King of heaven. He is the King of glory. Now that's my king,""Well, I wonder if you know him...Do you know my King? He is God's Son. He's the sinner's Savior. He is the centerpiece of civilization. He stands alone by Himself. He's honest. He's unique. He's unparalleled. He's unprecedented. He's supreme. He's pre-eminent. He's the grandest idea in literature. He's the fundamental doctrine of theology. That's my King.He's the miracle of the ages. He's the one to supply all our needs simultaneously. He supplies strength for the weak. He's available for the tempted and tried....He heals the sick. He cleanses the lepers. He forgives sinners. He discharges debtors. He delivers the captives. He defends the feeble. He blesses the young. He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged....That's my King." "Do you know him? ...His promise is sure. His light is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His Word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. I wish I could describe him to you... but he is indescribable. He is indescribable. That's my king. He is invincible...He is irresistible...You can't get him out of your mind... You can't outlive him and you can't live without Him.... Death could not handle Him and the grave couldn't hold him...He always has been and always will be. That's my King!

What a kingdom

The King who rides on a lowly donkey offers you a place in his kingdom and a peace this world cannot give. The prophet Zechariah describes this peace in this way. "I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem. 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." This peace is described in Isaiah as the wolf living with the lamb and the lion eating stray with the ox. Jesus said,

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." The peace Jesus gives is the ultimate peace of knowing sin is forgiven and God loves us dearly even if our whole world falls apart. Romans 5 describes this peace, "Therefore sin we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rome could offer peace to the city of Jerusalem but it was nothing compared to the peace Jesus offers people who live in his kingdom. During my junior year in college, I took a course on Roman history. The professor who taught that class became ill and a retired professor stepped in. We never had tests that whole semester. For the final we had to write an essay on the Latin words he wrote on the board: "Si vis pacem, para bellum." If you want peace prepare for war. Jesus offers a peace far superior to the peace Rome had to offer. Jesus went to war against the forces of evil as he hung on the cross. By a miracle of God's love Jesus was able to take every sin every committed upon himself, pay the punishment for us, and provide us with peace. Think of the battle that raged on the cross as he cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." When it was over he triumphantly cried, "It is finished" and then he said with a loud victorious voice, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit."

Look at Jesus riding into Jerusalem. Look at the kingdom your king provides for you. He rules your life, controls your life, carries you in his arms, sustains and strengthens you. "Nothing in all creation will ever separate you from his love." Your King is your Shepherd who told you, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." The Lord is my shepherd, not the Lord is a shepherd. No the Lord is my shepherd. Listen to the prophet Zechariah proclaim to you, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion...See your king comes to you." He did not say, "See a king comes to you, he said, "See your King come to you!" Every day I can dance for joy, shout for joy, sing for joy. That's my King. And when he returns again on clouds of glory, I will dance for joy and shout for joy and say without any fear or hesitation: "That's my King!"

Amen.