

Rejoice! Your King Comes!

Text: Zec 9:8-12

1) The work of the King

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Person of the King

733, 87, 210, 283, 115

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Zechariah 9:8-12, ⁸ *I will camp around My house Because of the army, Because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them, For now I have seen with My eyes.*

⁹ *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.’*

¹¹ *“As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. ¹² Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare That I will restore double to you. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The message of a pastor to his congregation on the basis of a text like this should be as simple and direct as the words of the text itself, Rejoice! *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you.”*

And there is nothing I would rather have you possess on this Palm Sunday, during this Holy Week, or throughout your entire life than this joy.

For joy is the mark of the Christian. The psalmist proclaims in Psalm 16:11, *In Your presence is fullness of joy.* Paul spoke of joy as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, something that must be present on the tree of faith. We read in

Galatians 5:22, ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.* Christ summed up His entire mission on earth in terms of joy, as we read in John 15:11, "*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*"

If such a joy was present, most of the problems in the Christian churches would vanish. Pastors would not have to plead with the people to worship if they enjoyed worshipping. There would be no need to beg people to spend more time and effort serving God and their fellowmen if they found joy in that service.

The most powerful missionary witness the church could give to the world today would be for its members to show in their daily lives that their faith is a joyous thing rather than a burden to be borne.

But the fact remains that nobody is really as happy as he would like to be. There are so many problems at home, at work, at school, everywhere — and we can not minimise or ignore them.

The events of Holy Week, the suffering and death of our Lord, show in fact that Christianity has its roots among the problems of life, that it has not and does not ignore that which is unpleasant in life and piously hope that it will go away, but that Christianity confronts and conquers it.

Holy Week cannot be properly understood without Easter. Again and again the Readings for today point out that Christ's humility and suffering reach their goal in His exaltation.

The Christ who rode into Jerusalem to suffer and die emerged as the victorious King! That is why on this Palm Sunday I joyfully urge you to look at what your King has done for you and to consider what kind of king He is — and to rejoice in Him. *Rejoice! Your King Comes!* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Rejoice! Your King Comes!

The Work Of The King

Firstly, your King brings Peace. Rejoice, first of all, because the victorious King brings peace, *Behold, your King is coming to you.* He is triumphant and victorious. Our text says, *I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse*

from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations.

Joy is closely related to peace, and with the people of Israel this was especially true. Israel had known more than its share of warfare.

When God delivered them from Egypt and made them His people, they were chased by the armies of Pharaoh. When they came to the Promised Land, they had to take it by force; and throughout its history, the land of Palestine was doomed by its position to serve as a buffer zone, a no-man's-land, between the more powerful nations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Even internally there was no peace. North and South soon broke apart resulting in constant civil war.

So it is no accident that when Israel thought about her future she thought about peace. Isaiah, for example, prophesied about One who would be named the *Prince of Peace*,¹ and he looked for the day when men would take their swords and spears and make them into implements for farming.²

Our text too sees that under the reign of the victorious King there will be no need for the weapons of war. The chariot, the war horse, and the bow will be abolished from the land. The arms race will be over.

Rejoice, because your Prince of Peace, Christ, has come. The angels sang at His birth, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.”*³ Peace is still necessary for joy, but in Christ we see the promises of God raised to a new dimension.

Before His Passion Christ said, *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you”*⁴ but His concluding statement reminds us that Christ's peace is something different from and more comprehensive than the end of war. *“Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

The peace for which Jesus came was first of all peace between God and man, the peace which had been shattered by man's rebellion. But now that that peace has been restored, there is a firm basis on which man can build for peace with his fellowmen. *“He Himself is our Peace,”* writes Paul, *“who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.”*⁵

Secondly, your King releases the prisoners. We rejoice not only because the King brings peace but we also rejoice because He has set us free from prison.

Our text says, ***“I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. ¹² Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare That I will restore double to you.”***

Victory and peace mean nothing to the prisoner who knows nothing but the walls of his cell. All he can do is to wait and hope. And that was largely Israel’s lot at the time of the Babylonian exile. During that time Israel almost ceased to exist as a nation, and lived on only in the hopes of those carried away to a foreign land.

Our text no doubt speaks to a situation like that. Not only would the coming King be victorious and establish a lasting peace in Palestine, but also these exiles, these prisoners of hope, would be set free to enjoy the blessings of His reign.

This act of liberation of the captives was as sure as God’s word. ***“Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.”*** God had made that covenant with His people at Mt. Sinai, there He had designated them to be His own people, and His purpose could not be thwarted.

Even when Israel sinned and broke her side of the bargain, yet God because of His great love and mercy did not consider that covenant null and void. He would remember the prisoners and forgive them and set them free to enjoy the new life.

Rejoice, for your King has also set you free. Luke tells us that our Lord began His ministry at Nazareth by entering into the synagogue and reading the words of Isaiah, ¹⁸ ***“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*** And adopting this as the program for His ministry Jesus announced ***“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”***⁷

The slavery from which Christ has set us free is that slavery which Paul stresses so strongly throughout his writings. It was slavery to the power of sin which ruled over our lives, a slavery which received its strength from the Law and led to death.

But Christ has died once and for all, to sin and law, and by His resurrection He has triumphed over them. And by our baptism we too have risen with Christ, we too have been set free from sin that we might live in a new kingdom and serve a new King, Christ. *“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*⁸

2. Rejoice! Your King Comes!

The Person Of The King

We can rejoice, then, because our King has come, He has established peace for us with God and man and released us from the slavery of our sins that we might serve Him.

But what kind of Master will He be? Take a closer look at this King, and here too you will find you have good reason to rejoice.

Firstly, the King is concerned for His people. History books are full of stories about kings who were victorious and brought peace but could not have cared less about the people in their kingdom. The people were only a means to an end.

Too often Israel saw the same thing in her own kings. There were too many men like Solomon, whose chief interest seemed to be in building and maintaining a splendid court, even though he might have to overtax the poor and use slave labour to do it.

Or like Ahab, who thought the possession of a small piece of property for his own use was more important than a man's life.

Ezekiel prophesied against such worthless shepherds as we read in Ezekiel 34:2, *‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? And in Ezekiel 34:22-23, I will save My flock ...*²³ *“I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them -- My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd.*

Our text makes it plain what kind of king it is thinking about. Even though triumphant and victorious, He is humble and lowly. He comes not riding on a war horse which is symbolic of oppressive kings, but on a donkey. The picture we get here of the victorious king is in fact something like the strange picture

which Isaiah paints of Jesus who was despised by men and considered a transgressor, but bore the sins of many and emerged victorious.

We know what our King is like. In His life on earth He showed Himself to be the perfect example of the good king who cares for his people. Other kings may build magnificent palaces at their subjects' expense, but this King did not build so much as a hut.

Other kings may want to be served, but this one came to serve, even to give His life in exchange for ours. Other kings may guard their prerogatives jealously and act as if they were gods — some have even had themselves declared gods — but our King would not let even His divinity keep Himself from becoming a man that He might die.

Christ's simple statement shows that you and I are His only concern as we read in John 10:11, "***I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.***"

Secondly, the King lives with His people. Our King then is humble and cares for His people. Nowhere is this made plainer than in the fact that He dwells with His people. Jesus does not remain aloof but comes to them.

God's presence among His people in the Garden of Eden shows that this is the heart of true joy. It is the heart of the covenant as well, where God promises that He will dwell in the midst of His people and accompanies them through the desert in the pillar of fire and cloud.

Even though at the time of the exile Ezekiel saw the glory of God depart from His temple, he looks forward to the day when God would again take up His residence in the temple. So our text pictures the victorious King once again dwelling with His people when he says ***I will camp around My house Because of the army.***

And it is in this dwelling of God with His people that all of the events of Christ's life and of ours fit together. When we last heard the words of today's Gospel, "***Behold, your King is coming to you,***" it was the first Sunday in Advent, and we were beginning our preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth.

During those weeks of preparation we thought of the various ways in which Christ comes to His people — about His coming into the manger at Bethlehem, about His coming to us through the Gospel, and about His coming again at the end of time.

And on this Palm Sunday we also see that these three comings are bound together and inseparable. It is the same King who comes, no matter what the manner of His coming. Each coming is dependent on the others and each points to the others.

Jesus, whose coming into the flesh we celebrate at Christmas still brings us joy as He enters into our flesh through the Word and sacraments. And just as the inhabitants of Jerusalem went out with joy to meet Him as He rode into their city, so we too shall meet Him when He comes again on the Last Day.

It is this coming of the King that gives us joy in the midst of our troubles as we live in this difficult period between the times when the King has begun His reign in the world and when every knee must bow to Him and proclaim Him Lord.

Even though we have been set free, we remain prisoners of hope like the exiles as we wait for the final deliverance. We read in Romans 8:23 ²³ *Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*

Like Christ we are involved in the troubles and difficulties of this world until the time set for our exaltation. So we wait and pray, as we did in the Collect earlier, that as we wait we may follow the example of our Lord's humility and that we may then be made partakers of His resurrection.

But the King has come, and He will come again. He has fought the decisive battle, and final victory is assured.

So let us wait with joy for that magnificent new heaven and new earth which has been promised to us, when each of us will understand fully what the beautiful words of Revelation 21:3-4 mean, *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ “And God will wipe away every tear from their*

eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

Let us conclude with the words of the hymnist,⁹

Thy Word, O God, declareth
No man hath seen or heard
The joys our God prepareth
For them that love their Lord.
Their eyes shall see Thy glory,
Thy face, Thy throne, Thy might;
With shouts shall they adore Thee,
The true eternal light. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Isa. 9:6

² Isa. 2:4

³ Luke 2:14

⁴ John 14:27

⁵ Ephesians 2:14

⁶ Luke 4:18-19

⁷ Luke 4:21

⁸ 1 Cor. 15:56

⁹ Hymn 210