

## Rejoice in the Coming of Your King

Palm Sunday

April 2, 2023

**Zechariah 9:9-10** - <sup>9</sup> “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. <sup>10</sup> 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.’

What does it look like to rejoice? If you had to describe to someone what it meant to rejoice – what it looked like – what it sounded like – what analogy would you use? Would you use the picture of a football stadium rising to their feet as the home team’s quarterback throws a touchdown? Is that what rejoicing sounds like? Or is it the cry of a mother and father as they hold their newborn child in their arms for the very first time? Can rejoicing sound like stunned silence? Or maybe it’s a man and a woman who have promised to marry each other – to be beside each other for the rest of their earthly lives. And for the next several hours, their family and friends gather to rejoice with them. Is a wedding what rejoicing sounds like?

Regardless of what you might have in your mind as what rejoicing would sound like – regardless of what you have in your mind as to what it might look like, maybe the more important question is, “When was the last time you really rejoiced? Oh, sure, we all go to weddings. And we all remember what it was like to hold our child in our arms the first time. And maybe we’ve even had the pleasure of being at a sporting event when a our team made an incredible play to win a game. But wouldn’t you agree with me that those moments that are full of rejoicing – that those moments are really few and far between – that when it comes right down to it, our lives really aren’t filled with a lot of rejoicing? It’s quite the opposite. Our lives are filled with hardships and trials and struggles of all kinds. Sometimes, it can be a battle just to get out of bed in the morning. Sometimes, it can be difficult just to survive the day at work. Sometimes, we might feel like the conflicts and strifes and arguments at home are just never going to end.

That’s why it’s so important for us to take just a moment from the business of our lives – from all of the distractions and the worries and the anxieties that we have, and sit back and listen to what God has to say to us through His prophet Zechariah. The very first thing that he is going to speak to us today is a command to rejoice. The very first thing that he says is that we are to shout for joy. But more importantly, he gives us a reason to do so. Today, our God comes to us through His Word and He says, “Rejoice in the coming of your King.” Rejoice in the manner in which He comes. And rejoice in the message that He brings.

### I.

I’ll read again the very opening lines of this Messianic prophecy about the coming of Jesus Christ, our Savior. It says, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!” Now, you remember that when these words were fulfilled on Palm Sunday morning that that whole thing was a day of rejoicing. They were getting ready to celebrate the Passover – one of those two required festivals where every faithful Jewish family got up from wherever they lived in the land of Israel and made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to the Holy City where they would offer their Passover Lamb at the temple. Passover was a great time of celebration – a time when the Jewish people remembered the great and mighty marvelous acts that God had done to rescue them from their slavery to Egypt. And it was precisely because of that that Passover in Jesus’ day had another reason to be rejoicing. You see, God’s people thought, “Wouldn’t it be very fitting if God were going to deliver us from Roman slavery just as we celebrate what He did for our forefathers, rescuing them from Egyptian slavery?” You see,

the reason that the crowds in Jerusalem were so happy is because they have this expectation that something great and marvelous and miraculous was about to happen – that God was going to send His King to throw off the fetters of Roman oppression and to make Israel a great and powerful political state once again. They had heard about this Jesus of Nazareth. They had heard the kind of things that He could do. He had given sight to a man who had been born blind. He had unstopped the ears of the deaf. He had driven out demons and cured leprosy. Just recently, the story said that He went to Bethany, and He actually raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. And these good Jewish people – they looked back at their Old Testament scriptures, and they saw all of those things were symbols that the Messiah was going to come. And they thought on Palm Sunday as they began to celebrate the Passover: “Could this be our King? Could this be the One who is come with all power and all authority to finally free us from the yolk of Roman oppression?” And so, when they saw Jesus coming, they took off their cloaks, and they laid them on the road in front of Him as close to the red carpet as they could come up with. And they took palm branches which were symbols of Israelite nationalism, and they waved them in Jesus’ path. And they sang, “Hosanna in the highest.” Hosanna means, “Save us. Save us from Rome.” “Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Because all these people thought that Jesus was the coming King who was going to defeat the Romans on their behalf.

Of course, all those people would be sorely disappointed. Over the next few days, it would become very clear that Jesus had absolutely no intention of overthrowing the Roman government. In fact, the people that Jesus takes aim at most often during Holy Week are the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the scribes – the very people who would have taken over the nation of Israel had Rome been driven out. It’s not surprising that those very same crowds that cried, “Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” would just a few days later cry out, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” Because this was not the kind of King they were looking for. This was not the fulfillment of Zechariah 9 that they had in mind.

But what about us? What is it that you and I see as we look off at the horizon and see this Jesus coming toward Jerusalem, surrounded by a crowd of people? Well this is what Zechariah says we should see. He says, “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.” As we look out on that horizon, and we see Jesus coming, we might think to ourselves, “Well, He’s going kind of slow. Why’s He putting along on a donkey?” Well, that is, in and of itself, a symbol of Jesus’ humility. If He had wanted to, the almighty King of the universe could have come on a war horse – on a steed. But He doesn’t. He comes on a donkey – the very same animal that King David rode into Jerusalem on the very first time he entered the holy city. Jesus was sending a message to all those crowds who were singing His praises: “Do not think that I have come to give you a political victory. Do not think that I have come to overthrow the Roman government with my great power and might. I come to you gently. I come to you as One who has been approved by God. I come to you as your Savior.”

And friends, isn’t that good news in the midst of your trials and your sufferings? As you consider everything that’s going on in our world right now. And as you continue your struggle with the arguments and the bickering in your family, isn’t it nice to know that Jesus comes gently? Isn’t it nice to know that Jesus isn’t going to come into your home and call you to the carpet for all your failures. Isn’t it nice to know that Jesus doesn’t come to destroy all those who stand in His path because if so, that means He would have to destroy me too. But no, our Savior comes to us in a very gentle manner – a manner that says, “Yes, I know that your life is a mess. Yes, I know that sin has ripped you apart and that because of all the sin in your life, you are not able to rejoice the way that I really want you to. But that’s why I’ve come. I’ve come to take away your sin. I’ve come to take care of your problem. I have come gently. I’ve come with this man Judas who’s going to betray Me. I know it. And I’m going to let him do it. And I have come so that these Pharisees and Sadducees and elders of the people – that they might falsely arrest and accuse Me. I know. I’m going to let them do it. I come so that I can be handed over to this wicked Roman governor, Pontus Pilate, and be crucified. I know. I’m going to let them do

it. And you know why? Because I am the King of Zechariah 9. Because I am the One who comes gently and having salvation. Because I come not so much to be a conquering political hero but a suffering Savior. I come not to overthrow Roman governors or emperors but the power of sin and the devil's hold on your heart."

And so, as we see that Savior getting closer and closer to Jerusalem – as we see that crowd singing His praises for all the wrong reasons, you and I know that we have every reason to rejoice. Even in the midst of our trials and our struggles and our heartaches, we can rejoice because we have a King who comes and who comes to us gently – who comes to us winning our salvation – who comes to give us the forgiveness of sins.

## II.

It's striking, isn't it, how the Lord pictures the work that this Messiah, this great King, is going to do. In verse 10 He says, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off." Again, those would have been the kinds of things these Jewish crowds were hoping Jesus would bring – instruments of war – things that would be able to overthrow the Roman government around them. But those aren't the tools – those aren't the weapons that Jesus brings. 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 first really important word in this prophecy is the word speak. How is Christ our King going to slay our enemies for us? How is He going to win the forgiveness of our sins? How was He going to fulfill this prophecy of Zechariah 9? He's going to do it with His Word. He will speak, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing." He will speak, "My Father, my Father. My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" And He will speak, "It is finished." With the Word of our God, Jesus comes to crush sin, death, and hell. He comes to give us the victory. He comes to be the great King we need both now and forevermore. He comes to proclaim, and to proclaim what? He says, "I will come to speak peace." Remember the very first Jesus spoke to His disciples after His resurrection? "Peace be with you." It's the peace that surpassing all understanding – a peace the recognizes that all those problems that make it difficult to get out of the bed each morning and all those things that make facing another work week almost impossible to bear, and the all the arguments and strife in our household – they're not magically going to go away because Christ our King has come. But it's the peace that gives us a reason to rejoice even in the midst of all those things.

This week, we are going to celebrate the coming of our King - when He came to Jerusalem to offer Himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. We will follow Him first to the upper room and watch Him give us the last gift He had – Himself – His own body and blood to eat and to drink. We'll follow Him to the Garden of Gethsemane and then into the Praetorium and to Golgotha and the cross. And, God willing, we'll follow His disciples to the empty tomb to hear the great news that He is not here. He is risen. And as all these things happen before our eyes once again – as we see our King again in all of His humility and all of His glory – as we recognize that this Jesus is God's King who comes gently, proclaiming peace, then we will have reason to rejoice regardless of what's going on in our lives.

Friends, you have Jesus. You have a King. You have the forgiveness of sins and victory over all your enemies. You will live forever and enjoy the glories and splendors of heaven. And that is a reason to rejoice – rejoice in the coming of your King. Amen.