Zechariah 9:9b Look! Your King is coming to you.

I can think back to those days of Sunday school where I first heard the history of Palm Sunday. How wonderful and exciting it seemed that Jesus was riding into Jerusalem. Did I understand it all? Not really. I didn’t grasp why people were strewing their cloaks and palm branches in front of Jesus. That action seemed to me to simply be one that was inviting the donkey Jesus was riding to become frightened and maybe buck him off. Yet, such did not happen. Nor did I really grasp the shouts of the people at the time. “Hosanna to the King, glory to God on high!” What I did grasp was the simple thought of a child. “Jesus must really be something for all of this to happen!”

I also remember the shock and dismay that hit me when in but a few days, on Good Friday morning, this same crowd of people would be standing before Jesus shouting “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” It was confusing to me that people could one day be shouting praise and thanks to God for Jesus and then only few days later shouting for his death on the cross. I just didn’t get it.

Yet as the years unfolded, what took place here with Jesus eventually did sink into my thick skull. Jesus was fulfilling God’s Word. Jesus was doing his Father’s will. Jesus was serving as our Savior. In truth, the best place to learn what was happening on Palm Sunday was not really the events of Palm Sunday itself but rather the prophecies about the event. The prophecies summed things up. The prophecies told you what was happening and why. To truly get a handle on this day of wonder, turn to the prophecies of God’s Word and contemplate what they say. That’s what we will do this day. We will turn our attention to the words of Zechariah that we might learn what this day is about. Our theme: **YOUR KING IS COMING.**

What is interesting to learn is that Zechariah is a post-exilic prophet of the Lord our God. What that means is that Zechariah served the people of God at the time of the return from their captivity in Babylon. Because of their sins, really, because they refused to repent of their sin, God had foretold and then carried out the Babylonian Captivity of Judah. The first waves of dispersion began in 606 B.C. The people of Judah were pulled from their home and taken to other countries to live. But God had decreed that this “captivity” would only last around 70 years. Thus in 536 B.C. the Jewish people were allowed to return to their homeland and once again establish themselves as God’s people living in Jerusalem.

Needless to say, the return brought all kinds of problems. Jerusalem had been leveled and needed to be rebuilt. That also meant that the Temple itself needed to be rebuilt. Unfortunately, the people put a priority on their own homes and needs. So for many years the Temple complex sat partially done. Into this difficulty came two prophets: Zechariah and Haggai. It is around 520 B.C. These prophets came to guide God’s people and to encourage them in their faith toward the Lord God.

Now remember. The Temple complex is really nothing more than of a shadow of the Temple that Solomon had built. The people are downcast by this “shabby” place of worship. It is Zechariah, moved by the Holy Spirit, who lifts their spirits to the glory that will be. Zechariah gives a wonderful, a beautiful prophecy of the Messiah to come, of that Savior who will save the people from their sins. And that, dear people, is what the words of our text are about. It is a vision of the marvel of what the Messiah, yes, what Jesus will come and accomplish for the believers in the Lord.

Notice how this prophecy starts. **“Rejoice greatly, Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!”** The prophet begins his words with a plea for joy and happiness. Stop looking at what is, the troubles, the distresses, the difficulties of your lives and getting things redone. Instead of moaning and despair, think about what the Lord is preparing to do. Think about the wonder of what will be when the promises of God are fulfilled in the Christ who will come. Look forward to the Messiah and in looking forward let your hearts and spirits be filled with joy and wonder because of what will be.

In a way, what Zechariah is encouraging on the people before him is exactly what you and I are also encouraged in. Instead of looking at this world before us, at its troubles and difficulties, at its evils and wickedness look forward to what is ahead. Look forward to the gift of God found in Jesus. For the Jews of our text, this meant that they were to think of what the Messiah would be and do. For us, we are encouraged to keep our eyes looking forward to the prize in Jesus, to the eternal life and salvation we will have with God in Heaven. In Philippians 3:20-4:1 we are reminded of this: **“But our citizenship is in heaven. We are eagerly waiting for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. By the power that enables him to subject all things to himself, he will transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body. So then, my brothers, who I love and long for, my joy and my crown, in this way keep standing firm in the Lord, my dear friends.”** Yes, temper this life with the hope and joy of the life to come in Jesus!

Back to our text. Why should the people rejoice? Because of the one coming. Our text says, **“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.”** What wonderful and uplifting words.

You will rejoice because your King is coming to you. It is clear that this king is the one promised to David and Solomon, the king that would descend from them and sit on their throne forever. In other words, it is the Messiah, the promised Savior who is coming. And did you notice what he is? He is righteous. He will be holy and perfect, he will be just in his judgments as He comes to perfectly keep the will and Law of God. This righteousness he comes with will result in salvation. That really is the whole purpose of his coming. To bring salvation to the whole world. No wonder the coming of this king is such a big deal. He is the very culmination of God’s saving promises. He is the One that God says will take care of the sins of the world.

Do you notice something unique about this King? It is in how He comes. He does not come with grandeur, fanfare and accolade, with armies and attendants galore. He comes humble. We grasp what that means in the life of Jesus. Jesus, the son of God, our King of salvation came into our world lowly and humble. He is born of poor parents. His first bed is a manger, a feeding trough for animals. And though the world should break forth in great jubilation there is very little joy and marvel raised at this birth. Because this King, this Savior is so ordinary. Hardly anyone even pays attention to his coming, except a few shepherds. And when the Magi from the East come, no fanfare and accolades burst forth but weeping and mourning because Herod attempts to kill the child by killing all the children in Bethlehem and territory. Yes, Jesus comes humble and lowly.

And even as this king is being somewhat recognized, again it is not with the show and glow of royalty and supremacy. Think of this day of Palm Sunday. The people recognize Jesus because he comes riding on the foal of a donkey. I can guarantee that had any Roman Emperor come to Jerusalem he would ride in with golden chariot and the finest of horses. Donkeys were meant for labor and work, not for royalty and the important. Yet here is Jesus, fulfilling this prophecy in such a way that everyone coming for the festival immediately recognizes what is happening. That’s why the people break forth in praise and joy. The prophecy told them to. That’s why Jesus says to those who asked him to quiet down the people, **“If these people would be silent, the stones would cry out.”** God’s King, God’s savior has come and He has come to bring salvation to the people. The prophecy called for shouts and joy!

The next lines are so very interesting. Notice how there is a shift in the pronouns here, from “he” to “I.” The text says, **“I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. The battle bow will be taken away.”** Those words of the prophecy set the stage for what will be. In the history of the Jewish people, for centuries the Jews were split into two nations, Northern Israel and Southern Judah. And yes, for the most part there was always a tension, if not outright hostility among the two kingdoms. God tells us here that this old division among the people will be gone. The Jews will be a united people when the Christ comes. And so it was in the days of Jesus. Even with the religious differences between Sadducee and Pharisee, the Jews were united as one people, united by the Temple of Herod which rivaled the beauty of Solomon’s Temple.

But there is not only unity, there is also peace. For the most part, the Jewish world was one of peace and prosperity. They were free to worship as they wanted. And prosperity? Not since the days of Solomon and Hezekiah did the Jewish people have it so good. There is no doubt that ancient hostilities were done away with and the battle bow was just not needed. And again, we find that 500 year old words come true!

Our next words. Again notice a shift in pronouns. Our text now says, **“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.”** Here is what this King, this Messiah will bring. He will bring peace. Not only that, he will establish a kingdom that will be found over the entire world. Our most important question: What is that peace?

Let me share with you three other passages that will help us understand the promise of God’s peace. In the Gospel of John is where the first two are found. Jesus says in John 14:27, **“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let it be afraid.”** The next is in John 16:33, **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you are going to have trouble. But be courageous! I have overcome the world.”**

Jesus says, **“My peace I give you,”** and **“In me”** you may have peace. He is clearly showing us that the peace he is speaking of is beyond this world and not of this world. Now look at what Paul says in Colossians, **“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things to himself (whether things on earth or heaven) by making peace through the blood of his cross.”**

These passages do help us get a grip on peace. God’s peace is not a worldly peace, it is a spiritual peace. It is the peace that comes from knowing that Jesus has died for you and that because of Jesus eternal life is yours. That is God’s peace. If you stop and think about it you will see that this is the peace that Christ proclaimed, the forgiveness of sins and freedom from the curse of the law through faith in him. This is **“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.”** This is a peace that no one and nothing in this world can destroy or disturb.

Next question. Where is this peace found? Now you can go out and look around the world, see the trees and flowers and all the wonders of creation. You can see in God’s creation the power of God and the wisdom of God, but you won’t find his peace.

God’s peace is found in only one place. It is found in what Paul calls, **“the gospel of peace.”** We are talking, of course, about the Word of God, especially the Gospel of God’s Word. It is the Gospel that tells us about Jesus and what he has done. It is the gospel through which the Holy Spirit works in you to create faith in Christ, to keep you in the faith and to strengthen that faith. Romans 5:1f says, **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”**

These passages help make it clear that Jesus is the source and cause of peace. It is the redemption won for us in Jesus that brings peace, true peace. We are at peace with God. We are confident and sure of our salvation because of the victory of Jesus. There is no fear, no worry, no doubts when this peace of Jesus is ours through the Gospel. It is the message of our eternal salvation.

There you have it. The wonder of what this day is really all about. Our king has come. He is Jesus. Jesus has come to grant us his peace, his joy of salvation simply because we believe and trust in Him. As far as I am concerned, the opening words are still for us: Rejoice greatly! Your King has come! Amen.