

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations; His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Text: Zechariah 9:9-10

Palm Sunday SS E Bay 3/29/15

Philippians 2:5-11 Matthew 21:1-11 Psalm 146

Hymns: 339, 162, 341, 367

PEACE IN CHRIST, NOT EARTHLY PEACE

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ,

The Jewish people at the time of Christ were ruled over by the Roman Empire. The Jews were at the mercy of the Roman rulers, some of whom were very cruel. The Jews were looking for their Messiah to come and free them from Rome and return their nation to the glory it formerly had under King David. The Jews wanted God to give them an earthly kingdom, with earthly peace.

There are always things in life that can cause us anxiety: the on-going threat posed by terrorists, the economic uncertainty in our own country and in many other countries, and on and on. Today our Lord reminds you and me where to find peace in the face of all the problems in the kingdoms of this world.

Our text was written by the Lord through His faithful Old Testament prophet, Zechariah. In Zechariah's day, the Jewish people were terribly

discouraged. The words of our text were written after the Jews had been conquered and taken into captivity by Babylon. Years later the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem, and a group of them did. Fourteen more years had passed, and they hadn't been able to rebuild the city or the temple because of opposition from their enemies and a growing lack of interest on their own part. They had hoped that the rebuilding would go quickly, but that hadn't happened. They saw that the nations around them were strong and prosperous, and wondered if and when their own nation of Israel would ever be that way again.

The Lord sent Zechariah to encourage His people. The name “Zechariah” means “Jehovah remembers.” Zechariah reminded the people that God had not forgotten them. As a nation they had brought most of their problems on themselves because of their sinfulness and rebelliousness against God. For all of them who would turn to the Lord in repentance, He would forgive them. As they obeyed God and His Word, He would bless them in all that they did. The Lord through Zechariah was turning His people's attention away from the troubles they were having, and giving them hope by reminding them of the coming Messiah. God would help them rebuild their city and temple, but they shouldn't place their hopes in their earthly kingdom of Israel. The Lord told them,

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you.” “Rejoice greatly, ... Shout.

That's real happiness! God told His people literally to “jump for joy” as they looked forward to their coming Heavenly King! They should place their hope and trust in Him and His kingdom of heaven.

God referred to His people as the “*Daughter of Zion*” because David had built Jerusalem, their capital city, on Mt. Zion. Jerusalem had been

destroyed by the Babylonians, but now the city and the temple were being rebuilt. There, God’s people would be able to come and worship Him. But whether or not they had an earthly temple in which to worship, they could give thanks and praise to God anytime and anywhere. The Lord reminded them, *“Your King is coming to you.”* They needed to learn not to look to an earthly country and earthly rulers for their real hope, but to their **Heavenly King**.

*“Behold, your King is coming to you; **righteous and having salvation.**”* These words cannot be describing any earthly king. They can only be referring to the Son of God. Earthly rulers can be self-seeking, dishonest, and even cruel. God would say of His Son, our Heavenly King, *“In **Him** I am well pleased”* (Mt. 3:17). Jesus said that He *“did not come to be served, but to serve”* (Mt. 20:28). Earthly rulers have their people serve them to establish their earthly kingdoms. But Jesus served us by living and dying in our place, earning the kingdom of heaven for us.

“Your King is coming to you ... mounted on a donkey.” How do modern day VIPs ride around? In beautiful, expensive limousines. In Bible times, kings would ride a beautiful horse. But the King who would come to God’s people would ride on a donkey. What kind of king is that?! Unlike so many kings, as Zechariah said, their King was *“humble.”* Again, this is no earthly king. Christ, our Heavenly King, said that He *“did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Mt. 20:28). Earthly rulers have their people fight their battles for them. Christ, our Heavenly King, humbly allowed Himself to be put to death on the cross to fight in our place against Satan, sin, hell, and death. **Jesus**, our Heavenly King, won the victory **for** us! Our Lord assures us: *“‘Comfort, comfort My people,’ says your God. ‘Speak comfortingly to Jerusalem; and cry to her that her warfare is ended.’”* God tells us what kind of warfare it is and how He ended it when He says *“that her **iniquity is pardoned**”* (Is. 40:1).

“I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem.” By this time, the Jewish nation had been divided into two parts. *“Ephraim”* was the Northern Kingdom, and Judah, where *“Jerusalem”* was, was the Southern Kingdom. *“And [the Lord] shall speak peace to the nations; His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”* God did give His people times of earthly peace, free from enemy attacks. But the nation of Israel’s recurring rebelliousness against Him made sure their peaceful times did not last. We’re not the only people to face the threat of weapons of mass destruction. People throughout history have faced the threat of the “WMDs” of their own time (our text speaks of the *“chariot”* and the *“war horse”* and the *“battle bow”*). When Jesus came, did He restore the earthly kingdom of Israel to its former glory? No. As the Messiah, Jesus brings peace and unity to the true Israel, spiritual Israel: His Christian Church.

“He will proclaim peace to the nations.” This King riding on a lowly donkey would bring peace to the whole world?! **None** of the greatest leaders in all of history, with their vast armies, could accomplish that! And they could never achieve a lasting peace. Where are they now? Only the Son of God can bring us lasting peace. But it’s not an earthly peace. Neither Israel, nor any earthly nation, can have absolute peace. Therefore, when the Lord promised to take away the chariots and war-horses and break the battle bows, He is talking about **spiritual peace** – the peace He gives us **in our souls**. As Jesus says, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ...rest for your souls”* (Mt. 11:28+29b).

Jesus has told us, *“My kingdom is **not** of this world”* (Jn. 18:36). Sometimes we look around at all the problems in the world and ask, “Lord, are You going to **do** something about this mess?” God created a perfect world for us. Adam and Eve wrecked everything. The Lord is always with us to help us and bless us. But don’t make the same mistake

the Jews made in Zechariah's and Jesus' day. They looked for the Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom with earthly peace. Because of sin, that is never going to happen.

We can't look to Jesus to give us heaven on earth, with perfect peace between us sinful human beings. Jesus says, "*In **Me** you may have peace. In **this world** you will have tribulation. But take courage! I have overcome the world*" (Jn. 16:33).

It is good for us to be responsible, informed, involved citizens. We pray that the Lord will give us good government. We need to be careful that we don't develop the mindset of looking for some earthly leader or political party as **the** solution to our country's many problems. Look to Jesus instead. Pray, do what you can, and place your faith and trust in **Jesus**. In spite of all the problems in our earthly kingdoms, Jesus gives us **His** peace. He gives us peace of mind by telling us, "*I am with you always*" (Mt. 28:20). Jesus gives us peace with God and with ourselves by telling you and me, "*Be happy, your sins are forgiven*" (Mt. 9:5). Jesus gives us peace in His assurance, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love*" (Jer. 31:3). Jesus gives us peace for each day in His promise that He "*causes **all** things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose*" (Ro. 8:28). Jesus gives us peace for the future by telling us: "*Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*" (Jn. 14:1-3).

The hope the Lord held out for His people so long ago is the same hope He holds out for you and me today:

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.”

In this Old Testament prophecy of Palm Sunday, our Lord promises us peace. Christ, our King, humbly, willingly rode into Jerusalem on a donkey that first Palm Sunday. Within a few days He gave His life on the cross, and, on Easter Sunday, rose again. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have peace in the forgiveness of our sins, peace that comes from God’s presence and guidance and blessings in our life right now, and God’s promise of perfect and eternal peace with Him one day in heaven. In spite of all the problems in the kingdoms of this earth, Jesus, our Heavenly King, gives us His peace! Amen.