

The King Comes

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. It's nice to see you. If you're new to the church, my name is Aaron. I am a minister on stuff. I mostly look after the evening. We're looking at Zechariah chapter 9 here on Palm Sunday. Here, it'd be helpful to have a Bible open or an app on your phone.

I love the start of this. First time, Zechariah starts by saying, rejoice. And then he says, the kind of rejoicing I'm talking about is it's loud joy. It's shouting joy.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. And that's a pretty bold thing to say to Israel at this point in their history.

They are trickling back to the promised land after being in captivity in Babylon for a long time. And they're just a really little, vulnerable province surrounded by much bigger players who don't like them very much.

But get happy, Zechariah says. Get happy. Why? Because the King is coming. The Messiah is coming. And he's going to make all things right.

[1 : 1 1] Now fast forward two and a half thousand years later. It's 2019. We're in Vancouver. Let me ask you this. The King has come. King Jesus has come and he says that he will return.

So we have a lot more to celebrate than these folks in Zechariah's time. So a question. Here it is. How glad are you to be a follower of Jesus, this promised King?

Genuine question. How glad are you to be a follower of Jesus? We have lots of sources of joy in our life, don't we? Lots of different sources.

For me, I really like a good deal. Like a really good deal. I pretty much buy everything on Craigslist. Craigslist. I bought a chair a couple of weeks ago.

Craigslist. \$300. An old leather chair with an ottoman. And when I looked at it, I said to the lady, I said, I said, I'm a Christian and I feel like it's integrous to tell you that.

[2 : 1 7] You know, I know chairs. I think this is quite a valuable chair. I said, but I'm happy to give you \$300 right now for it. I promise I'll treasure it. So she was happy to sell it to me.

It's an extremely rare Japanese-designed chair from the early 70s. It's worth about \$5,000. And the coasters are made by Ferrari, like the wheels are made by Ferrari.

True story. True story. Getting a good deal. That's a source of great joy for me. Maybe you're like me. You like that kind of thing. Or it's just sort of money in general.

Or maybe a great source of joy for you is happiness and love. Or family. Or success at school. Or a particular hobby that you have.

That's all fine and good. But are you happy knowing that the King has come and that He will come again? Is this a tangible source of joy for you?

[3 : 1 2] Look, I know that's a really searching question. It's a hard question. And maybe it's a hard question for you at the moment because Jesus is actually just not a great source of joy for you for a variety of reasons.

Maybe it could be that you actually feel like the Christian faith is a bit of a straitjacket for you and you fantasize about the fun that you could have if it wasn't for Jesus.

Or maybe you feel a bit defeated or maybe you don't feel like you measure up or maybe you just don't think about Jesus that much. Maybe your life is consumed by, I've got to have more.

I've got to be more. I've got to do more. And it creates this phrase I heard the other day, this ambient anxiety. It sort of crowds out much thought about Jesus.

You certainly need joy related to Jesus. Now, if that's you, and if the honest answer is, do you know what? Jesus is not really a huge source of joy in my life for various reasons.

[4 : 1 4] If that's not you, well, Zechariah has just some fabulous things to say this morning to us. So let's get into it. Before we've already started, really, rejoice, Zechariah says to this vulnerable

little province, the king is coming.

And then look down. What does Zechariah do next? He tells us what the king will be like. And he says this, the king that's coming is going to be righteous.

We had a terrorist shooting in New Zealand about a month ago. It was a terrible business. And I was quite weepy for that first week. I'm told by my friends and what I read in the paper that Jacinda Ardern, our prime minister, prime minister of New Zealand, did this wonderful job of leading the country during this time.

She led with humility and with kindness. And here's an amazing fact that I read a couple of days ago.

New Zealand immigration has reported that interest in moving to New Zealand since the terrorist attack has doubled in the last month. It's remarkable, I think. People are wanting to move to the place where the violence happened.

[5 : 25] Why is that? Here's my read. I think people are craving heads of government, craving leaders who they believe are good and honest and humble, who are not driven by self-interest, who do not present as arbitrary in their decisions.

God in His Word here in Zechariah is telling us, we're saying to us, just imagine, imagine a place where all the decisions made were made by someone who was righteous, who was perfectly just. That is what it's going to be like under the promised king. What else about this king? Verse 9, Salvation is a key word in our passage.

I think the rest of the passage unpacks this idea of salvation. I'll show you what I mean. Have a look at verse, where is it? I think it's verse 9 still. Because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

So God is saying, I've made a promise to save you. It's not a promise to incrementally improve your life. It's not a promise to give you a helping hand. It's a promise to save you.

[6 : 46] And this picture of this waterless pit, back in these days, these were like cisterns. So they had a small opening, and it was like a bulb-shaped cistern. It's the same thing that Joseph was thrown into by his brothers.

Because of the shape of it, this is not the kind of thing you can escape yourself. If you put in one of these things, you've got two options. These two results is death, or these rescue. That's it.

Now these are all word pictures, aren't they? So what is God saying here? He's saying the king is coming, and he's going to rescue you from something that you can't escape yourself. And not only that, continuing the metaphor, the king will destroy the enemies that put us in that pit.

Where do I get that from? Well, you notice there's a lot of battle language in the passage. Verse 10, I'll cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem. The king will disarm the world and then slide a few verses down.

Verse 14, Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord God will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.

[7 : 55] Here is a picture of a king overcoming our enemies. There is no defense against lightning. There is no defense against a whirlwind.

You can't fight these things. The victory that the king is going to bring will be swift, and it will be complete. And there's this great passage, verse 15, And they shall devour and tread down the sling stones.

That's us. The sling stones, you know, like David defeated Goliath with a sling stone, right? The things that the enemy try to attack you with, they're just going to be lying on the ground, right? They shall devour and tread down the sling stones. We'll just walk on those things. And they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine and be full like a bowl. It's like people are sort of having a barbecue, and you know, at a barbecue, people get a bit loud and a bit boisterous and a bit joyful, and they're celebrating, and all the things that were meant to kill you, and attack you and destroy you.

It's just detritus lying on the ground. That's what the victory is going to be like. It's wonderful. It's an incredible scenario. Imagine that. Imagine the joy of having a perfect leader, a righteous king.

[9 : 14] No enemies. No enemies inwards. No enemies outwards. Imagine victory over the enemies of your soul. Imagine going through life with no guilt, with no shame.

Imagine victory over the enemies of your mind. Imagine not lusting. Imagine that. Those places our minds go, lusting over things, over people.

Imagine the enemies of our body were all defeated. No more sickness, no cancer, no heart disease. Even the small stuff, even the little things. I read a tweet from a middle-aged man the other day that said, my favorite childhood memory is my back not hurting.

Imagine an end to all systemic evil in the world. Folks, the Bible promises nothing less than this. A perfectly just world, the total eradication of evil.

It's a big promise. How's the king going to do this? Behold your king. Verse 9 again. Behold your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation as he humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

[10:40] So 500 years after Zechariah had this vision, let's say this, we're in Jerusalem and the governor is Pontius Pilate. It's spring. It's Passover.

Jesus arrives in the outskirts of Jerusalem and he's pretty famous at this point. After all, he's calmed a storm. He's healed the sick. He showed he has complete dominion over evil and very impressively, he's raised a few folks from the dead.

So he arrives in Jerusalem and there would have been a ton of pilgrims pouring into that city for the feast. A lot of people would have recognized him and loved him. Jewish nationalism was running high because of the Passover.

So the Roman guards are looking around nervously, hoping there isn't a riot. Lots of religious leaders too, of course, but they didn't like Jesus.

He was messing with their gig. They wanted to kill him. They weren't going to do it here. Too many people. They'll buy their time. They'll find a quiet place and have him arrested.

[11:46] So Jesus, the king, enters Jerusalem into a city dominated by Roman pomp and splendor. Into that city, Jesus rode a young donkey.

Scholar Clarence McCartney wrote this about Christ's entry in Jerusalem. He said this, How strange a contrast to the triumphal entry of ancient warriors and conquerors into the cities which they have taken.

This time, no walls are broken down for entry. This time, no garlanded hero standing in his war chariot, driving down the lane of cheering subjects past broken orders and followed by captive kings and princes in chains.

Instead of that, just a meek and lowly man riding upon a donkey. And why a donkey? Predicted 500 years before in our passage.

Why a donkey? Because even though Jesus is the king, he's going to be a king no one expects. He's going to be a servant king. And it's in his serving that he'll begin to plan to destroy all evil and save us.

[12:51] He'll save us through weakness. He'll save us through dying. Not that anyone understood that, of course, at the time. The people are laying down their palm leaves in front of them. The scholars say that those palm leaves symbolized Jewish nationalistic desires.

And they shout, Hosanna to the son of David. The enthusiasm was fairly short-lived, we find out, as they didn't want a Messiah like Jesus. They wanted a hero. They wanted a national hero, a warrior king who would rid them of Rome.

And the irony is, if they had had, if Jesus had been the kind of king the crowds wanted, he wouldn't have been the king they needed. If Jesus had been the kind of king the crowds wanted, he couldn't have been a king that saved them.

Let me finish up. Christ is the promised king. Turned up 2,000 years ago. He saved us through his death so we can have a relationship with the Father. And Christ the king will come again and finally, once and for all, destroy all our enemies of our minds, our souls, our bodies of this world, all the systems.

Look at this second and last verse in our passage today. It's a great verse. And on that day, the Lord their God will save them as the flock of his people. For like the jewels of a crown, they shall shine on his land.

[14:19] On that day, God will produce in us purity where there is ugliness, generosity where there is greed, trust where there was anxiety, beauty where there was sin.

God will do this. And he says, it's going to be like you'll shine like jewels in a crown. The universe will look at you and see indescribable beauty.

And we get to experience some of that now, but not in his fullness until the king returns. So imagine that, eh? Imagine that.

Let your mind settle on that. And I think when we begin to do that, we grasp a joy that can't be taken from us.

We can grab a hold of a joy that remains when other sources are taken from us. And I think when we digest this vision from Zechariah, we can become what the passage says we can become.

[15 : 27] My favorite verse, verse 12, it says, we can become prisoners of hope. We're captured by hope. We're prisoners of many things.

We're prisoners of anxiety. We're prisoners of, I've got to do more, I've got to be more, I've got to have more. But we can be prisoners of hope.

Let's be that one. Amen. Amen.