

"The Coming King"

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Date: 24 March 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. It's good to see you all. I did want to follow up on Nick's announcement about our upcoming sabbatical. One of the things I've become aware of is that I will be on sabbatical in the season where Trinity says goodbye to a lot of people. And so I want to invite those of you, if you are moving on at the end of this spring or this summer, whether for work or for school, would love to just say goodbye to you before I disappear and before then you disappear, and we don't have a chance to do that. So I did want to just acknowledge that. We'll be at the potluck all day. So I would love to see you if you're here and are able to do that. And then I will be here for the next two Sundays as well, just so you know.

Well, as Pastor Nick has said, today is Palm Sunday, the day that we remember back in the first century when Jesus entered into Jerusalem to great acclaim where the crowds lay down their cloaks before him and palm branches on the road in a royal welcome and cried out, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. They welcomed him with great joy because they saw a king.

Because they saw someone who could bring them hope. And they needed that king because they didn't have one. You see, in the first century in the people of Israel, they knew because they had heard the stories what the kingdom of David looked like and its greatness. And they had read the prophets and the promises of a kingdom that would still come, a kingdom of righteousness and justice, a kingdom of peace, a kingdom where the righteousness, the goodness of God would be exalted through a kingdom in the world.

But instead of that, they were experiencing almost the opposite. They were not a sovereign nation state. They were oppressed in a vassal state to Rome.

They didn't experience righteousness and spiritual fervor, but instead had division and frailty. And they longed for a king who would come to make things right and bring the kingdom that their hearts longed for.

[2 : 4 6] And friends, we have a similar longing in our hearts, if we're honest, I believe. Because we want that kingdom to come too. We want a kingdom to come so that the world will be a place of righteousness and justice, a place of prosperity and abundance.

And we want a place of peace and goodness and beauty. And we struggle, don't we? Because we feel hopeless with that longing.

We see the brokenness of politics and of social movements to actually right the ship and make it a better world. We see the ongoing effects of sin and death and the ravages of war.

And we despair. And not just globally and structurally, but personally. Our own lives don't have the kingdom that we long for.

Our relationships are broken and strained and fraught. And they fail. Our souls are prone to wander from the things that we know are good and right.

[4 : 0 1] And to love things that bring us destruction. All for the sake of a momentary hit of pleasure. We know as we gather here on Sunday that our worship is not as single-minded, is not as wholehearted, is not as joyful as it could be.

And we want a king to come and to make it better. We want a king to come to make it right. This leads us to our passage this morning.

We're going to be looking in the Old Testament. We're going to be looking in the prophet Zechariah. If you're using a pew Bible, it's page 748. And I'm telling you now, because Zechariah is one of the minor prophets, it's not always easy to find in your Bible.

So you have a few minutes to look for it while we talk about it a little bit. Zechariah was a prophet who prophesied after the Babylonian exile.

If you remember, King David, the pinnacle of the kingdom, and then it all went downhill from there. Divided kingdom. The northern kingdom fell. The southern kingdom fell into exile.

[5 : 21] Seventy years of exile. And then beyond that, then through God's miraculous work, the Jews were able to return to Palestine and reestablish Jerusalem and begin to build its walls and begin to build the temple.

But in that time, just like in the first century, and maybe just like today, there was a longing because it wasn't the fullness of the restoration of the kingdom that they longed for.

Remember, the ESV Study Bible, which, by the way, is a great resource, just a recommendation, that's a freebie. But the ESV Study Bible gives this in its introduction to Zechariah.

It says, there was little evidence in 520 BC of the kind of transformation of the state of things that earlier prophets had anticipated, whether externally in a restoration of Jewish sovereignty or internally in a moral reformation of the people.

Instead of returning to Palestine gloriously, they returned. And if you remember, when they built the temple, they wept because it was small and puny compared to the glory of what they had seen before.

[6 : 36] And they longed for the king to come and to bring his kingdom. And in the midst of that longing, Zechariah, well, Zechariah, this is a big book.

There's lots there I'm not going to talk about. But in this passage today, Zechariah gives us a promise that king is coming. And he gives us a picture of what kind of king God is going to bring to bring about his kingdom.

So that's what we're going to look at today. Let's read Zechariah. Zechariah chapter 9. We're looking at 9 verses 9 through 17.

All right. Here's our passage for this morning. 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.

[7 : 47] 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.

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope.

Today declare that I will restore to you double. For I have bent Judah as my bow. I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword.

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

The Lord of hosts will protect them and they shall devour and tread down the sling stones. And they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine and be full like a bowl, drenched like the corners of the altar.

[9 : 01] 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.

For how great is his goodness and how great is his beauty. Grain shall make the young men flourish and new wine the young women.

Let's pray together and ask for God's help. Lord, we thank you for this word. Lord, we thank you for the encouragement and the hope that it brings us.

Lord, we pray that as we look into it, this morning and consider what it means for us, Lord, that you would open our minds to understand your word, that you would open our wills so that we might submit to your word and open our hearts that we might delight in your word this morning.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. What kind of king will God send to bring his kingdom?

[10 : 13] Well, first, he is a king who will come in humility. In this first section, we see in verses 9 through 9 and 10, we see how Jesus comes.

And, you know, remarkably, when you look through it, particularly as you look at verses, verse 10, you think this is the king that everyone wants, right? This is a king.

He says, this is your king. He's coming for you. He is a king who will bring righteousness. That means that everything he does is going to be evidently true and good and right.

It will be righteous in the sense of just. It will be righteous in the sense of morally correct. It will be righteous in the sense of bringing order in a good and life-giving way.

Not only does he have righteousness, but he has salvation. He will break the powers of oppression and bring freedom. He is a warrior king who will come and make victory.

[11 : 13] This is what verse 11 is telling us. When you look at verse 11, I'm sorry, verse 10. Verse 10, he's saying, I will cut off the chariot and break the bow.

What he's saying is, you, Israel, will no longer need to have your own weapons of warfare. With Ephraim representing the northern part of the nation of Israel and Judah being the south, saying none of you are going to need your weapons anymore because the king will come and he will have all the power he needs to bring the victory all by himself.

And so there is this, and it says, and when he comes, he will bring global peace, right? He will speak peace to the nations, all of them, and from one sea to the other, from the river to the, the whole world will be brought under his rule in peace.

And this is a pretty awesome kind of king. This is the one that we long for, isn't it? Right? And when you think about what, in the first century, what the hopes were of the people there, they wanted a king who's going to ride into Jerusalem like the emperors of Rome would ride into Rome after a military conquest on a great white steed armed to the hilt with an army at his back bringing the prisoners in tow.

And it was a picture of power and might and strength. And yet, this king doesn't come on a great white steed, does he?

[12 : 58] Verse nine again. Rejoice and shout aloud because your king has come riding on a donkey. A donkey is a symbol of peace.

As a steed, someone who would ride a donkey would be a peacemaker. And it's very clear from the text. Humble and mounted on a donkey.

The king who comes, the one who's going to conquer, does not come like the kings of this world, wielding a sword, beating down his foes.

Now look, let me just give a caveat because we're in the book of Revelation in our series. And there is a day when these victories will happen. There is a time when Jesus will come and he's going to bring that, right?

And the imagery in Revelation points us and reminds us that he does have power and he can do those things. And yet, when he comes to do his signature, his key, his most important, the pinnacle of the work of redemption that he's going to do as a king, how does he come?

[14:10] He comes on a donkey. Humble. This is the beauty, my friends, of the Christian gospel is that when Jesus came, he didn't come with great fanfare.

He came in humility and in weakness and in obscurity. and he didn't come to the great people and overcome them or win them, but he came to the poor and to the outsiders and he said, you come, follow me.

One commentator on Zechariah put it this way, the lowly scene verse 9 creates encapsulates the nature of the kingdom that Christ established.

The suffering, humiliation, and death that unfolded on the palm-strewn road he traveled would eventuate in the conquest of countless human hearts and in his ultimate rule over a new heavens and a new earth.

Little did the onlookers, the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday understand the full import of what they were witnessing. While many shouted, Hosanna, some must have looked and wondered, why is he riding on a donkey?

[15:43] But it shouldn't be a surprise. Do you remember what Jesus said to his disciples when they were fighting over who gets to sit at the right hand and the left, who gets the positions of power with him, who gets to ride his coattails into the White House?

Jesus called to them and said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and the great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be your slave even as the Son of Man came.

not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. So this is the first thing that Zechariah points out.

What kind of king is he? He is a humble king who comes not in greatness, but in weakness. Of course, we know that there's more than this.

We know that he's able to save. We know that he's able to deliver. We've already seen it mentioned in verse 9. Verses 11 through 13 help us see more of how he's going to do that.

[16:59] Verse 11, 13 tell us that he's going to come to save us through sacrifice. Verse 11 gives us the context of our salvation.

He talks to us as prisoners, right? He says, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Now, if you've ever been in the Middle East, which I haven't, but as I've been told, they have these cisterns, right?

They're big pits that they do, and they often are filled with water during the rainy season. It's one of the ways they keep the water, and then they preserve it and use it as long as it's wet, right?

But then in the dry season, it's dry, and it becomes this earthen pit in the ground, and it turns out it's a very useful place to keep prisoners when you don't have a jail.

And so, the picture here is people who've been thrown into an earthen pit that they can't climb out of. Remember Joseph when his brothers threw him in a pit? I think it's the same kind of pit here.

[18 : 01] So, so, so it's talking about those who are stuck in a huge dry well, left there to suffer and to die.

It would be a terrifying place to be. I was reading earlier this year an account of a man who survived the death camps as a Jewish man in the, during World War II in Germany.

and when he describes the despair and the hopelessness of the prisoners and many of them who, who literally died from lack of hope as much as abuse or anything else.

I think this is what Zechariah is speaking to as he talks about the prisoners who were thrown into the waterless pit, longing for freedom and wondering how, how are we going to be freed?

How do we, how do we get out of this pit? How do we get out of this prison? We can't save ourselves. And friends, before we go on and talk about how this passage describes how the king saves us, let us recognize that the Bible talks about a greater slavery and a greater prison that we all live in.

[19 : 26] And this is the prison of sin. Since Adam and Eve fell in the garden, we have all been stained and infused with sin.

and it leaves us helpless to experience and to know the kingdom of God as he intended it in its fullness.

Sin robs us in so many ways. Our ego and our self-protection, our lust for our own power and glory, our self-centeredness and our selfishness that exclude God, our desire to make God serve us and our agendas rather than serving him.

This sin holds us like a death grip and our souls are dead because of it. This is what the Bible tells us. And like prisoners in the dry well, we can't make ourselves alive.

But Jesus is your king to set us free. And we see in verse 11 the means of it. Because of the blood of my covenant with you. This is how God does it.

[20 : 38] Now, we need to stop for a minute and think about covenants. Covenants are promises. They're typically agreements. They have different kinds of forms. Some covenants in the Bible seem to be conditional.

Something like the Mosaic law. If you obey my law, then I will bring blessing. If you disobey my law, I will bring cursing. But we also see other kinds of covenants like the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 15.

I don't know if you guys know this story, but God comes and he says, Abraham, I'm going to make you the father of great nations. And I'm going to bless you and I'm going to bless the world through you.

And then he does this ritual. Do you remember this ritual? It says, take three animals, cut them in half as a sacrifice. And then Abraham falls asleep and he has this vision of a pot that goes back and forth.

Because in the old days, these covenants would be made where there would be agreement. You do this, I will do this, right? And in this case, God was commanding Abraham to be circumcised as a part of the covenant agreement.

[21 : 47] But it wasn't a conditional one because typically the two parties would cut animals and then they'd come together and walk through it together and they would say, may this and more be done to me if I break the conditions of this covenant.

Right? But what happened in Genesis 15 is Abraham didn't walk between the animals. Only God did. God said, I will make a covenant with you.

I will do this and I will do everything that's necessary for you to fulfill this covenant so that it cannot be broken. And I believe this is part of what God, I'm not sure whether Zechariah is referring to the Abrahamic covenant or to the Mosaic covenant or to the Davidic covenant.

I actually think he may be weaving a rope and saying, it's not one of those, it's all of those. I'm building towards a new covenant. I'm building towards a greater covenant that will fulfill all of these promises and I will do what is necessary.

And this is what we see. Jesus, who walked into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, four days later, sat with his disciples in the Passover meal and said, this covenant is a new covenant in my blood.

[23 : 19] Shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins. Do this in remembrance of me. Like a Passover lamb, Jesus goes and says, I will be the substitute.

I will die for the firstborn. I will die for you because of your sin so that you don't have to. so that you can come and simply receive by faith the blessings of the promise and entrance into the kingdom that I've established through my sacrifice.

So this is what Jesus does. He comes to establish his kingdom through his death and through his resurrection. through his blood sacrifice for us.

And friends, we look around and we think, but that happened 2,000 years ago. Where is kingdom today? Well, the good news is that the new covenant that was established through Jesus will one day bring a new heavens and a new earth.

We know this, that Jesus will come. We know that when he comes again, he will bring all of these things to fullness and fruition and we will experience the greatness and the excellence and the completion of his kingdom.

[24 : 56] For those of you who want to stick around for the rest of the spring as we preach through the rest of Revelation, we're almost there. We're in chapter 19. Chapter 19 and 20 is all about the victory over evil and chapter 21, oh my gosh, it's such a beautiful vision.

It's such a compelling hope that we know that Jesus the king has already fundamentally won and he will one day bring it to fruition.

And this is our great hope, hope, that the lamb who is slain will be the one who will be worshipped as king. So Zechariah tells us that the kind of king that God is going to send will be a humble king and he will be a king who will give himself up in sacrifice to save his people and finally he will be a king who will come to help us flourish in his beauty.

This is what we see in verses 14 through 17. And we need to acknowledge that there is a picture here of the military victory, right? 14, 15, 16.

It's remarkable, isn't it? This king comes and he has an arrow that's like lightning, right? And he will sound his trumpet. Remember the trumpets that sounded in Jericho and the walls fell down?

[26 : 22] Trumpets have this great, we actually talked about trumpets in Revelation. Trumpets are signs of military force coming to victory. He will blow his trumpet and he will march forth with the whirlwinds of the south.

There's a, south of Israel, there are commonly these extremely strong windstorms. And Zechariah's pulling on that imagery to say, he's going to come like a hurricane.

He's going to come and he's going to blow you away. And in the midst of it, he's going to protect his people, right? And his people will overcome, right?

And they will devour and they will tread down the sling stones, which means that even though the trebuchets may be throwing big rocks at them, it won't hurt them. They will tremble over them like pebbles.

And they will roar in victory. Verse 16, On that day, the Lord their God will save them and the flock of his people.

[27 : 31] For like jewels of a crown, they shall shine on his land. For how great is his goodness and how great is his beauty. Grain shall make the young men flourish and new wine, the young women.

This vision of this king who comes ends in this picture of flourishing, of abundance, of richness, of joy. The kingdom that the king comes, and again, there are images here, right?

The images of the grain and the wine are images of a healthy harvest, a kingdom that's flourishing, a land that is producing abundantly for those who are young so that they would have joy in the land that they live in.

And what he's saying here is the goodness of God and the beauty of God will feed our souls better than wine and grain and we will flourish as we gaze upon the beauty of this king who came humbly, who came in sacrifice, sacrifice.

This is where his beauty is most fully seen. I know, Isaiah says he had no beauty. He had no human beauty, but the beauty of his sacrifice, the beauty of his love, the riches of his grace, the depths of his mercy, this is the goodness and the beauty of the king who has come.

[29 : 06] And friends, we have the privilege now to taste of it because Jesus is risen from the dead and he is calling his people and even now we can take hold of the foretaste of the fullness of the kingdom.

them. And this is why Zechariah begins with rejoice because friends, we are to have joy, joy on this Palm Sunday that our king has come, joy on this day that our king will come again and that the promises are secure and that his work is finished and that he is a savior who is unlike any other who has come to save not the way we think we would want to be saved but the way he in the riches of his mercy and grace and his unfathomable wisdom the way that he has come for us on that day when the Lord returns.

Revelation 21 says this, and he who is seated on the throne said behold I am making all things new also he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true and he said to me it is done I am the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end to the thirsty I will give from the springs of water of life without payment the one who conquers will have this heritage and I will be his God and he will be my son.

oh friends this Palm Sunday let us rejoice we have a great king a king above all kings let us worship him let's pray together Lord we do confess that there are times when it's hard for us to rejoice in the midst of the trials and the brokenness of this world Lord when we see that the darkness seems to prevail when we think that the rulers of this world will continue forever Lord when we struggle in our own hearts and souls against our sin and the darkness that creeps in

Lord help us to see you in all of your beauty help us to see you who didn't count equality with God something to be grasped but humbled himself made himself a servant took on human flesh and became obedient even unto the death on a cross Lord help us to see you exalted exalted exalted as the one who died and who lives again who now is exalted to the right hand of the Father the one who reigns the one whom one day every knee will bow heaven and earth and confess that you are Lord Lord restore our hope and renew our joy this day we pray in Jesus name

[32 : 58] Amen