

Sermon Text: Zechariah 9:8-12 ⁸ I will camp around My house Because of the army, Because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them, For now I have seen with My eyes. ⁹ " 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. ¹⁰ 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.' ¹¹ " As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. ¹² Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare That I will restore double to you.

Sermon Theme: Rejoice in the Coming of Your Savior King

- 1. He sets prisoners free from the gloomy pit of captivity.**
- 2. He establishes a kingdom of peace.**
- 3. He protects His kingdom from all its enemies.**

In the name of our Savior King Jesus Christ dear fellow redeemed;

Many years before Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday the city was anything but a place of jubilation. Some 500 years prior to the life of Christ the Jews of Jerusalem could not be heard rejoicing, shouting for joy, and singing their hosannas. A remnant of Jews had just recently returned to Jerusalem after having been released from their captivity in Babylon. They came back to their holy city only to find it in ruins. Everything had been leveled to the ground by the enemy, including the glorious temple which had been built by Solomon. And now they were faced with the difficult project of rebuilding. As the people went about the task of reconstruction, they became disillusioned and discouraged. Being reminded of the glory which they had before with their temple, nation, and city, they were disheartened to see that things were not as they once were.

However, the Lord gave a message to the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the prophet Zechariah which should have greatly gladdened and cheered their hearts. He foretold the coming of a very special King who would come to set prisoners free from the gloomy pit in life; establish a great and glorious Kingdom of peace; and protect His people from enemy attacks. And since the reign of His Kingdom would extend far beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem, people of every race and nation would have cause for rejoicing through out time and into eternity.

The descriptive prophecy of Zechariah found its perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In verse 9 of our text, we hear those familiar prophetic words, "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." This, we well know, came to pass on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a little donkey. A great multitude hailed Jesus with the words, "Blessed is

the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Lk.19:38) The welcoming party gave Jesus a royal reception by spreading their coats and palm branches on the road for Him to pass over on. And they rejoiced and praised God for His coming.

Did the daughters of Jerusalem, that is, all the many Jews who came out to greet Jesus know why they had good reason for rejoicing over His coming? Sadly, no! Do all those who are observing Palm Sunday today know the reason for this Christian festival? Sadly, no!

In order that the rejoicing of the Palm Sunday celebrants might not be misguided, shallow and empty, the word of our Lord helps us to recognize the true purpose for Jesus’ coming to Jerusalem that day and therefore know the real reason for rejoicing. It dispels the faulty notion that Jesus came to restore the nationalistic glory which Israel once had - a pipe dream which many present day Jews and evangelicals are still expecting to take place at some future time. This is one of the major reasons for evangelicals’ huge backing of present day Israel. The Word of God also exposes the false idea that Jesus came to remedy all the social ills and woes of this world, and remove all our physical ailments so as to establish a utopian world in this temporal existence.

The very manner in which Jesus approached the capitol city of Jerusalem sheds light on this matter. Had Jesus come as a political King to drive out the Roman soldiers and right the wrongs of social ills and economic injustices He would have come dressed in full armor, riding on a battle proven horse, and accompanied by a mighty army. Instead, Jesus came dressed in lowly garments, riding on a young, unbroken donkey, and accompanied by fishermen. This lowly manner of approaching Jerusalem was representative of Jesus’ humble life of service as a spiritual King of human souls.

This King had indeed come to set people free. But instead of setting us free from political, social, and economic woes, He came to set us free from the deep, dark, and gloomy spiritual pit in life. The LORD declares in verse 11, “As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.”

What is this waterless pit Jesus came to set us free from? It is the deep hole we can dig for ourselves by reason of our erring, sinful ways of thinking, living, and acting. It is the waterless pit of devoting our lives and energies primarily to the pursuits of transitory, earthly goals which can take us down a dead end street. For in so doing what is often times neglected is spending time on working on our relationship with the Lord and not giving due attention to making God pleasing provisions for entering the blessed life to come. It is the waterless pit of listening to and following the prompting of our sinful nature so that we engage in loveless behavior toward one another or pursuing worldly pleasures.

Such rebelliousness can only serve to separate us from the Lord here in time and hereafter in eternity. This spiritual pit is very dark and gloomy. For if and whenever we would find ourselves being held in this dreary pit, we will have lost sight of that truly meaningful and purposeful life which our Savior redeemed us for. The apostle Paul declares in his letter to the Corinthians, “He (Jesus) died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” (2

Cor. 5:15)

While in this dark pit our spirits are oppressed with the feelings of guilt, fear, and shame. And were these feelings to continue without any relief they could eventually drag us down with the feelings of hopelessness and despair, such as what took place with Judas Iscariot.

But praise be to God, when we sing our hosannas to Jesus Christ it is because He came to save us from the dreadful pit of sin and eternal destruction. As Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He was going there to meet His death. He was entering the Holy City so that at the end of the week He might shed His precious blood on the cross for our eternal redemption. This is the blood of God's gracious covenant which lifts us out of that eternally destructive pit. Each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper we are comforted with these words of our Savior, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Mt. 26:28) This blessed truth lifts us up and removes from our shoulders the oppressive burden of guilt and blame for all our sins; it sets us free from the dominion of sin in our lives so that we dedicate our lives in service to God and His ways of righteousness. Above all, it gives us the certainty of eternal life. This truly gives us and all who behold Jesus as their Savior King reason to rejoice and shout for joy.

With Jesus coming as Savior King He would establish a Kingdom where peace is found. In verse 10 of our text the LORD declares, "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.'" This Bible passage has been frequently misused by Millennialists who believe that when Jesus returns to earth for the second time He will establish a worldwide earthly peace lasting for a thousand years. However, Jesus declared that His kingdom is not of this world. Rather His kingdom is spiritual in nature and in it is found righteousness, peace and joy in the Lord. Speaking of the kind of peace Jesus blesses us with, He declared, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." (Jn.14:27) The apostle Paul testifies of what this peace consists of as he writes to the Romans, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith in this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom.5:1,2)

The reference in Zechariah of the LORD cutting off the chariot, the horse, and the battle bow is a picture symbolizing the spiritual peace that Jesus would establish. This is further attested to by the following verse where it says, "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.'" Jesus would establish and extend His brand of peace throughout the nations of the world through the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation. Paul refers to this when he speaks of these prophetic words in Isaiah and the Psalms, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!... Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." (Rom.10:15,18)

The peace which our Savior King gives transcends any kind of earthly peace which the world might achieve. For not only does it enable us to be at peace with God, but also to live at peace with each other as we exercise Christian love which comes from knowing and experiencing our Savior's great redeeming love for us.

The coming of our Savior King also means we can live in complete security in the presence of our enemies. The LORD says in Zechariah, "I will camp around My house Because of the army, Because of him who passes by and him who returns." During the declining years of Israel the Jewish nation was subjected to attacks from enemy nations such as the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians. This happened to God's chosen people because of their rebelliousness and disobedience to God. The enemy which the coming Savior King would protect us from represents an even greater threat than those of human empires. While enemy nations like Babylonia could only hurt and kill the body, the kind of enemies which Jesus protects us from can hurt our souls, causing even eternal destruction. Heading the list of course is Satan. Holy Scripture says of this powerful foe and his legion of evil angels, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph.6:12) Besides the devil and his evil horde there are the misguided people who would mislead us by covering up their godless ways with fine words and fair speeches, and cause us great spiritual harm. There are the humanists found in influential places and in different segments of society who propagate their religion of man which leaves no room for the God of heaven and earth, His standard of morality, and His gracious saving ways. There are the rationalists who change the Word of God in order to satisfy their human reason and in the process rob us of the precious truths intended to comfort and strengthen us. There are the liberal modernists who deny fundamental teachings of Christianity which would take from us the hope of eternal salvation. All these direct their attacks against our souls. However, when we are armed with the clear and simple truths of God's Word and by God's grace hold fast to them such enemies of the soul can harm us none. With our Savior encamped around us with His Word of life and salvation not even the gates of hell shall be able to prevail against us.

Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is truly a wonderful thing to behold for us sinful mortals. We rejoice and shout for joy that He came as our Savior King to set us free from the pit of sin and everlasting condemnation, and to establish His kingdom of spiritual peace among us, and to stand guard over our souls through His powerful Word of grace and truth. As the Lord comes to us through His Word and Sacrament, may He continue to rule in our hearts and minds and thus bless us with spiritual freedom, peace, safety, and finally eternal deliverance. Amen

