

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.

¹⁰ **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. (NIV84)

Theme: Our Lowly King comes to Save his People.

1. Not from earthly enemies.
2. But from spiritual enemies.

Have you ever thought about how strange it must seem to unbelievers when we sing hymns—to put some words to music and sing them to God. They might especially think some of the words we sing are especially absurd. For example, take the words of the second and fifth stanzas of the hymn we just sang, “Ride On, Ride On, in Majesty.” There we sang, “Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die.” In lowly pomp—what is that? That’s an oxymoron if I’ve ever heard one! How can there be a display of splendor and magnificence that is also lowly or humble? It just doesn’t make sense. How can someone show how great he is, and yet at the same time show how lowly and unimportant he is?

And yet that line perfectly describes Christ’s humble entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. For today our Lowly King comes to save his people. Not from earthly enemies, but from our spiritual enemies.

By the time Zechariah wrote this book the Jews had been living in Jerusalem for about 20 years. They had finally returned from exile in Babylon. During this time the Jews hoped for a quick restoration of their former glory. They thought that they would be able to quickly rebuild their city. That they would be able to plant their crops, to become a prosperous and vibrant city once again, and to be able to be

free from the fear of their enemies. They planned on being able to worship in the temple once again. They had hoped to celebrate their religious festivals as well.

But it didn’t happen. The countries around them threatened them. And prohibited them from rebuilding the temple and their city. Soon the people became discouraged. Life wasn’t as they expected. It wasn’t easy. They were suffering, but their enemies seemed to prosper. The unbelievers of the countries around them were superior in strength and had more freedom. And to top it all off, the Messiah whom they thought might come when they returned to Jerusalem had yet to appear.

Their problems sound a lot like ours. Life isn’t easy. It’s hard sometimes. It doesn’t always go as you expect or hope. People mistreat you. Others hold you back. The plans that you made fall through. What you were going to do to become successful and prosperous never come to fruition.

So you became discouraged. You’re worried about the future. You’re not sure what will happen in the days and years to come. How’s your health going to hold up? Will you be able to retire when you want and as comfortably as you want? So you spend much energy agonizing over the future. Your thoughts are consumed with worry and doubt. You may even wonder where God is during all of this.

Just like the people living in Jerusalem. That is why they were hoping for the Messiah to come. Their view of the Messiah was different than ours. They were hoping that the Messiah would come and restore their fortunes. They wanted someone who could help them in their earthly plight. Perhaps he could restore their economic prosperity. He could be their military leader. Defeat all of their enemies and remove any threat of an invasion. And that’s still what many people expected of the Messiah at the time of Jesus. They wanted a king who would defeat the Romans and lead them from under their oppression. Sadly we often limit Christ in a similar way. Some make him into nothing more than an earthly King. As someone who can save us from earthly oppression. He is one who can heal our diseases. He can give us a job, make that girl love us, or help us pass the test. We make him into someone who makes us prosperous, who punishes those who

mistreat us, who makes our lives more comfortable. We may have the tendency to make God into someone who is here to serve us. He is to make our lives better, to do our bidding, to do what pleases us.

But that's not who Jesus is. Oh, he's a king alright. But he's not your typical king. Normally kings will enter a city or a nation with a great show. They will wear their best royal or military garbs. They will be riding on a large stately magnificent horse. They will come with power. They will come and flex their muscle and leave no doubt as to who is in charge.

But not Christ. He came in lowly pomp. Not on a big powerful war-horse. But on a lowly donkey—a beast of burden. That's perfect for Christ. He didn't come to be a normal king. Christ wasn't concerned about an earthly kingdom. He didn't come to defeat our earthly enemies. He didn't even come to make our earthly lives better. God's words in verse 10 tell us that Jesus didn't come for an earthly war. **I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken.**

No, Jesus came to save us from our spiritual enemies.

One of the main duties of a king is to win victories for his people. A king will do this by invading another country. When he does, he will do it by great force. He attacks the enemy with his full army. He might lose a good number of men, but it's worth it since he will win a victory. He would then gain for himself a new land. Or perhaps he is protecting his land from an enemy. Again he will lose a good number of men, but it's worth it since he will win a victory and protect his people.

Jesus too fought a battle for us. But he didn't come with a huge powerful army. And he didn't come to inflict damage on anyone. No, in fact when Peter cut off Malchus' ear in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested, Jesus rebuked him. **Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?** Jesus had the most powerful army ever ready at his disposal. One of those angels, let alone a legion of them, could easily defeat any army that has ever been

on this earth. But Jesus didn't use this army. He had another battle to fight.

His battle wasn't against the forces of this earth—it was a spiritual battle. His battle was against sin, death, and the devil. Jesus started that battle by living a perfect life for us. Zechariah alluded to Jesus' perfect life when he referred to Jesus as righteous—for that means he is perfect and without sin. And then he won that battle for us through his death and resurrection. For it was on the cross that Jesus took all our sins upon himself. He became guilty of everything we have done wrong, was forsaken by God, and he gave us his perfect life. Then he died. But now he lives—for he was raised from the dead. And it was through his resurrection that he defeated death and crushed Satan's head. He won the ultimate victory. And he gives that victory to us. And now he lives and reigns in heaven. As we read in our second lesson, he was exalted by the Father, who raised him from the dead. From his throne he watches over his whole creation. That's another difference between Jesus and every other king. An earthly king rules as long as he is alive. When he dies he can no longer rule—he's dead! But Jesus didn't start his reign until he died! And now he will reign over an everlasting kingdom that will never end.

When a king rules over his people he uses threats to do so. He threatens his people that if they don't obey the laws that are set forth, then they would be punished. Perhaps they would be thrown in jail. Or fined. Or if the offense is really severe, criminals may even be executed. A king rules by force—or the threat of force. As Paul says about the government, **he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.**

But that's not what Jesus uses. He doesn't force people to believe in him and follow him. Rather he motivates us through the gospel. He shares with us his Holy Word through which he brings us to faith. And it is his love for him that motivates to follow him. Zechariah prophesied that Jesus, **will proclaim peace to the nations.** Jesus did that when he proclaimed the gospel of peace. It's a message that brings us the peace of forgiveness. That on account of him and what he has done our sins have been removed and paid for. And because of what he has done we have eternal life.

Early in the morning of Jesus' death, Pilate asked him if he was a king. Jesus replied, that he was a king but he added, **My kingdom is not of this world.** In Luke 17 Jesus mentioned that you cannot see the kingdom of God and point to it saying **here it is or there it is, for the kingdom of God is within you.** Jesus' kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. It's a spiritual kingdom. He won for us a victory over our spiritual enemies. He died and rose again, and now he lives and reigns forever in heaven. He rules in our hearts through faith. Through the gospel he has brought us to faith and now he rules our hearts through that same gospel.

Don't limit Jesus by making him simply into an earthly king. He didn't come here simply to make our lives better. His purpose is not to make us more prosperous, successful, or happy. Although he can do those things—he is so much more than that. He is our king not to save us from our earthly enemies, but from our spiritual enemies.

So we do what Zechariah prophesied. **Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!** That's what the people did on the first Palm Sunday. **"Hosanna!"** They shouted, **"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"** We follow their lead. We rejoice greatly. We shout the praises of our Savior-King. We do this throughout the year. But perhaps during Holy Week we shout and rejoice even louder. For today begins the pinnacle of the Church Year. On Thursday Jesus graciously gives us his true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. On Friday he takes our sins upon himself and suffers and dies in our place.

And Easter—well Easter is the highlight of the year. The most important day on the Church Calendar—For Christ rises from the dead to promise you eternal life. So rejoice greatly. This Holy Week and especially on Easter, shout the praises of our Savior. For our king has come. Not to win an earthly victory, but a spiritual one. In fact he has already won for us that victory. So let us join together in singing his praises.

Those songs may seem absurd to others. But not to us and even more importantly, not to God. And so we sing those songs—those hymns of praise loudly and with joyful hearts. For Christ is our King who comes to win for us the ultimate victory. Amen.