

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. (NIV 84)

Theme: Our king comes.

1. He comes in lowliness
2. He comes with peace

When Kings, Presidents, or other leaders of a nation decide to go to war, they usually make a big deal out of it. They typically want their enemies to know they are coming. They try to intimidate, they try to rouse up support, and to motivate their soldiers to do whatever it takes to win the war. They want everyone to know—We are big, we are strong, we're coming; and we're going to destroy you.

That is typical of someone who is entering a war. But then there is our King, Jesus, going into a battle. Jesus came with a little fanfare—but not much. He came riding on a donkey. He came to fight the battle against our spiritual enemies.

Today we see that our king comes, he comes in lowliness; he comes with peace.

In 539 BC the Persians, led by King Cyrus, defeated the Babylonians. A few years later Cyrus let a group of Jews return to Jerusalem. It had been about 50 years since the last of the Jews were forced into exile. During that time the city of Jerusalem and the temple were in ruins. The Jews planned to rebuild their city and their temple. But they faced opposition. The countries around them tried to stop them from rebuilding their city and temple. They wrote letters to the Persians, who ordered them to stop.

And the people became discouraged. They had hoped that it wouldn't take long for them to rebuild the temple and town. They wanted to worship their God; and to have a safe place to live. Here they were, back in their hometown after years in exile. But the town they longed for was in ruins. The place of worship for their God was still a pile of rubble. And they couldn't do anything about it. They lost confidence, they were losing their faith in God. They were supposed to be free, but their enemies still had control over them.

We might feel the same way from time to time. We try to build up God's house, but it seems everything is working against us. Our spiritual enemies try to prohibit us from worshiping our Savior. They try to keep all people away from God's Word. You bring up your children in the care and instruction of the Lord, but they don't always listen. You brought them to Church, Sunday School, and the like; but instead of listening to God they listened to the world and all its false teachings and fell from the faith. And you wonder why God isn't with you and doesn't watch over your family. You study God's Word—at home and at Church. And you encourage others to do the same. But it seems people are more concerned with their favorite websites than their favorite books of the Bible. You encouraged them to attend Bible Class with you, but the attendance becomes less and less. You tell others about Jesus. You live a life of faith and you share the gospel with as many people as you possibly can. But no one takes you up on your offer to attend a worship service. And people start making fun of your beliefs. You know God wants you to share your faith. But why doesn't he bless your efforts? And you become discouraged and don't want to share your faith any longer. We have spent some time, effort, and resources in order to invite people to worship next week. But what if no one comes? Is it all in vain? Why wouldn't God bless our efforts? Does he not want his Church to grow? Our sinful nature casts doubt in our minds—but it's not our only enemy. The devil and the world are also our spiritual enemies. And when they attack us we wonder if God is with us and why doesn't he help us in our times of trouble?

Enter our King. In the verses leading up to our text, Zechariah tells the Israelites a tale of destruction. A king was going to come and save

them from their enemies. He would destroy all the nations around them. The Syrians, the Phoenicians, and the Philistines would all be no more. All those heathen nations which seemed to be so superior in the eyes of those who had returned to the Promised Land would prohibit them no longer. This would be fulfilled in the near future for those Jews. But Zechariah had something greater in mind—the coming of the Savior.

He prophesies about Jesus—their king. He said this king will come **riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.** This prophecy, of course, was fulfilled on Palm Sunday—the day when Jesus came riding into Jerusalem. Zechariah told the people to **rejoice greatly and shout.** And they did. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on that Sunday, people put their cloaks and Palm branches in front of him. They sung loudly his praises. **Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**

It was a glorious entrance. Yet it paled in comparison to an entrance into war. It was just one man. He came to wage war against our spiritual enemies. But he didn't come with millions of soldiers. He didn't try to intimidate the enemy. He went into battle on a donkey—not a majestic and powerful war horse. But a lowly work animal. One who wasn't even fully grown. One that he didn't even own—he had to borrow it. Jesus' entrance into war was one of humility and lowliness.

Anyone can enter into battle with all the pomp in the world. What really matters is the outcome. What happened as a result of the battle. The outcome for us is righteousness. For our King came with righteousness. That is holiness. Not once did he sin against God. He kept all of God's laws perfectly for us. And when he died he gave us his righteousness. Less than a week after he entered into battle he died. When he died he took our sins away. And he made us holy in God's sight.

The HCSB says that Jesus also came victorious. But Zechariah really says that Jesus came and was saved. He was saved by God. Even though Jesus was righteous, he was forsaken by God. He was forsaken by God because he took all our sins upon himself and became guilty of everything we have done wrong. And thus he suffered through the pain and agony of hell. But he was lifted up. God accepted the sacrifice of Christ's blood. And raised him from the dead. Jesus proved that he was victorious over our spiritual enemies.

Because our king came into battle and defeated our Spiritual enemies we don't have to worry about them. Even though Jesus entered in lowliness, he came out victorious. Our enemies can do no real harm to us because Christ is with us. And through him we have peace.

In verse 10, Jesus says through Zechariah, **I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken.** This king didn't need the normal weapons of war. He didn't need the horses and chariots, which were essential for winning battles at the time. He didn't need bows and arrows. This wasn't a physical battle Jesus came to fight. It was a spiritual one. Christ didn't come to force people into submission. He came to win us over.

We might be tempted to think that we can help Christ out. We can aid him in building up his Church. So we try to add to his gospel. Or hide the teachings that are controversial, or hard to understand. We try to make it more attractive. Perhaps we can add some guitars and drums; show some cute video clips and so on during the worship service. That way more we might get more people in here. People want to be entertained after all. Maybe we can trick them to come in for something other than to hear the Word. And when they are not paying attention, we can sneak it in.

But that's not out Christ builds his Church. He doesn't need members. He wants believers. And the only way one becomes a believers is through the gospel. Zechariah says he came to **proclaim peace to the nations.** That is to proclaim the gospel. That is how he builds his Church. Whenever the gospel is heard the Holy Spirit is at work. He brings people to faith through the Word and strengthens them in their faith. Through the gospel in the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion he does the same thing. He brings us to faith in baptism. And he strengthens people in their faith through his body and blood in the Lord's Supper.

As God, the Holy Spirit can bring people to faith through whatever means he wants. But he doesn't. He says that he only works through the gospel. The means of grace are the gospel in Word and Sacrament. The only means through which the Holy Spirit works. But, we may be saying, if that is the only way the Holy Spirit works, then why does it

seem as if it often doesn't? We don't we have more people on Sunday mornings? So we become discouraged from spreading the gospel. We may think that it doesn't really work. But God's Word is powerful and effective. It is as sharp as a double-edged sword. And it always works. As God said in Isaiah, **As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**

Because the gospel works, we do whatever we can to spread it. We tell everyone we know about their Savior. We want them to know of his life and work. We want them to see that God came down to suffer and die to save us from our sins. And that through his resurrection we would live with him forever. And we don't stop spreading it. The Holy Spirit works through the gospel when and where he pleases. We often don't know when he is working. We plant the seed, and the Holy Spirit makes it grow. But we never know when that seed will start to grow. It could take years. So we plant as many seeds as possible. And let the Holy Spirit do his work.

And what is the result? The nations will have peace. As the gospel is spread people are brought to faith. And they have the peace of forgiveness. The peace of mind knowing that their sins will not count against them. They will know that God is not against them. For through the work of Jesus, they are considered righteous in God's eyes. And they will live in heaven forever. Through the gospel, the kingdom of Christ will be from sea to sea. It will reach through the ends of the earth. For Christ will rule in the hearts of all believers. He will reign forever and ever.

And this is possible all because our king came. He came into town riding on a lowly donkey. And he picked a fight. He willingly let himself be killed in that fight. Because through his death, we won. That is why Palm Sunday is so great. It's the beginning of the battle. Our king enters into war to win a victory over our spiritual enemies that we couldn't possibly win on our own. So this week we watch in awe, amazement and praise. For our King is powerful, eternal, and victorious.

Zechariah's name means, "The Lord Remembers." And that is the message for us today. The Lord remembers us. He knows our plight. He understands that we face spiritual enemies. And he remembers us. He didn't let the Israelites fend for themselves when they came back from exile. He defeated their enemies and led them to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and to build a brand new Temple. He also remembers us. He defeats our spiritual enemies. Through the gospel he builds his Church. And he brings peace to the nations.

Our king didn't come with much fanfare. There wasn't a huge spectacle about it. Just a lowly entrance riding on a donkey with a few people singing his praise—only to desert him a few days later. But the entrance into war isn't the important thing—but the outcome of the battle. And that battle our lowly king is about to win. So let's watch this week in amazement and praise. For our lowly King comes into battle and he will leave victorious. Amen.