

Pentecost 6 / July 9, 2023

Zechariah 9:9

**“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is come to you.”**

Behold your King is coming to you

Five centuries before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Zechariah sang, “Behold, your king is coming to you!” Five centuries before Jesus was received into Jerusalem as the King of Israel, the prophet Zechariah cried out in joyous anticipation, “Look, your King is coming to you! Righteous and having salvation.” Have you ever waited a long time? The Chicago White Sox baseball team is one of the oldest professional sports organizations in the United States. They were founded in 1900 and have played 123 consecutive seasons. In all that time they have won the World Series three times. That’s a lot of waiting between championships. We wait a long time for some things in life. Sometimes we wait forever! And while sometimes it takes a long time, God’s time always comes and He fulfills His promises!

Five centuries after Zechariah prophesied the coming of the King, Jesus entered Jerusalem just as Zechariah said, humble and mounted on a donkey. The evangelist commented, “This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet.” God has a different sense of time than humans. God’s timing is perfect! At just the right time Jesus fulfilled the prophet’s words, though not as people expected. He was crowned not with gold, but with thorns. Instead of being raised up on a royal throne, He was lifted up on a cross. It wasn’t what people expected. Jesus didn’t fulfil people’s expectations, but He fulfilled Zechariah’s prophesy. We have to be careful that our expectations of God are in line with His promises. Jesus came to speak peace to the nations. He gives peace with God to all who receive Him in their hearts as Saviour and King.

Zechariah cried out, “Look! Your King is coming to you righteous and having salvation.” Jesus was righteous and He came with righteousness. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness, by living a life free of sin and by sacrificing Himself on the cross for the sins of the world. Jesus gives salvation through the forgiveness of sins to all who receive Him as King and allow Him to reign in their lives. Zechariah speaks to us today. He cries to us, “Look! Your King is coming to you!” Jesus comes through word and sacrament. We experience Him in our fellowship as believers. Jesus will come again and fulfill all the promises God spoke through Moses, the prophets and evangelists. Our King will establish His eternal kingdom in the creation of a new heavens and a new earth, the home of righteousness. Here today and throughout all the earth to the end of days, Jesus comes through the gospel and proclaims peace to the nations. Jesus speaks through the words of the scriptures and the voice of the believing church. He says, “Come to me, all who are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” He calls us to Himself as our Saviour that we may rest in His peace as our King.

Zechariah prophesied saying, your king comes to you righteous and with righteousness. He would be a different king. If you read the history of Israel in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, you will soon realize that not many of the kings were remotely righteous. Most abused their power. Some committed acts that would be considered atrocities in any age. None were righteous in comparison with God’s perfect righteousness. Like every human soul, all were sinful and fell far short of His glory. But, God has a different measure of righteousness for His servants. His measure is faith in Him and faithfulness in worshipping Him as the only God. King David sinned greatly in many ways, both as a man and as a king. He committed adultery. He misused his royal power to murder and cover up his crime. Yet one thing David never did was to worship other gods alongside or instead of the Lord. He worshipped the Lord and Him only did He serve and acknowledge as God.

Zechariah’s prophetic ministry followed the dispersal of Israel among the nations and the captivity of Judah in Babylonia. The northern kingdom of Israel went into permanent exile. The southern kingdom of Judah was exiled from the land for seventy years, but allowed to return. These things happened, because they and their kings had worshipped foreign gods. The Lord pushed them out of His presence, because they violated the covenant in which He said, “You shall have no other gods.” They broke the command that said “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and Him alone shall you serve.” There is no greater sin God’s people can commit than worshipping other gods, or any god but the Lord. We worship the Lord God and Him only do we serve!

When Zechariah announced the coming of the King, he was speaking of a different kind of monarch. Jesus was righteous and came with righteousness. He is the Son of God, begotten in eternity of the same substance and nature as the Father. As a human being, Jesus was conceived in time and born into this world in bondage to sin

and under the condemnation of death. As God and a human being, Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of God's law. He loved the Lord with His whole heart, soul, mind and body. He loved His neighbour, His fellow human beings, as Himself. He was obedient to His Father in all things, loved and served Him alone. In this He became our Saviour! Jesus comes with righteousness and salvation. Through the perfection of His life and the sacrifice of His cross, He atoned for human sin. He comes today in righteousness with forgiveness and salvation for all to receive. He calls "Come to me and I will give you rest." In Him we rest in God's peace!

Jesus came not with the pride of kings, but as a humble servant when He entered Jerusalem. Jesus came in humility, first by clothing Himself with our flesh and by sharing in our humanity. As Paul wrote in the letter to the Philippians, "He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness." Being made in human form through conception by the Holy Spirit and birth through the Blessed Virgin Mary, He further humbled Himself "by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." He did this, so that through the shedding of His blood, He would make atonement for human sin. He made atonement for sin so He would establish God's righteous reign in the hearts of all who receive Him through baptism into His death and resurrection and faith in His holy name.

Jesus brings the righteousness of God into the hearts of all who receive in Him in repentance through the humility of faith. He calls, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden." He promises, "I will give you rest." Are you weary? Are you heavy laden? Jesus calls you to Himself that you may rest in His peace. He says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls." Jesus' humility was not simply His disregard for the pomp of kings and humble appearance. Jesus' humility was His love for every human soul and for everyone of us. His divine love led Him to live as one of us. His divine love led Him to the cross, on which He died to make atonement for our sin. He who had no sin made Himself a sin offering, so in Him we would receive the righteousness of God in forgiveness and become the righteousness of God in holy living. He calls us to live in His peace!

Your King comes to you in humble form. He speaks through the scriptures; written, spoken and heard with ears of faith. He comes through the water of baptism, the bread and wine of Holy Communion. He gives us a share in His death and resurrection. He washes away our sins. He drowns our sinful nature. He nurtures and nourishes our faith. He renews our spirits through His Holy Spirit so we may walk in newness of life and honour Him as king with our lives. He seeds and reseeds faith in our hearts with the word of life. St. Peter exclaimed, "You have the words of eternal life." He speaks peace to those who listen. He gives peace with God to all who receive Him in their hearts as King and believe in Him as Saviour. Our King comes to us righteous and having salvation. He calls us to Himself in His word and through His sacraments. Let us come to Him in faith and faithfulness. In Jesus' name. Amen