

## Title: “Behold, your King is Coming to You”

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Zechariah 9:9-12

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**Service Readings:** Zechariah 9:9-12, Matthew 21:1-11

*Continuing with the theme of Messianic prophecy and fulfillment, this message focuses on the fact that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday both (A) fulfilled Scripture and (B) indicated His humility. He comes “gentle and riding on a donkey,” just as he came into the world in a Bethlehem stable—instead of a palace nursery. His kingdom truly is not of this world.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

In his commentary on the book of Zechariah, Reed Lessing writes the following about this section of Scripture. He says: “People in the despair of bondage have at least two questions. First, does God have the power to free us? Second, is God compassionate enough to free us? In Chapter 9, the prophet answers both questions with a resounding yes! At the beginning and at the end of the chapter, Yahweh comes in power – in the middle, he sends a humble King full of compassion.”

Now, tonight we did not read the entire chapter but picked up in the middle of it, so we may not see with the same clarity that Reed does the power and compassion of God. But hints of it exist even in what we did read.

Listen again to this short passage:

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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

<sup>12</sup> Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;

today I declare that I will restore to you double.

You can hear the declaration of God’s power at the start of this passage as the prophet names God as King, full of righteousness and worthy of our acclamation. And you can hear it affirmed again at

the end where he promises to destroy the enemy and set the prisoners free. But right in the middle you find that this all-powerful King – this ruler of all heaven and earth will come to us humble and mounted on a donkey.

Oh how backward it is that this king of kings will enter so lowly, that this creator of the universe will set aside his might to be slain by his very creation. How backward it is that our sinless savior would pick up our sins, suffer our punishment, so that he could share with us the reward for a life lived in perfect obedience, perfect sinlessness. It makes no sense to us, it seems so backwards to us, that the king of kings will chose to serve instead of destroy his fallen creation.

Is it no wonder, then that God gives this prophecy to the world 500 years before the birth of our Christ? We will need this time to more fully comprehend this plan that he is exercising. We will need this time to discern his mercy and his love that he shows through this action. Years, yes, many years will be necessary to better understand what all this means. But those long years, even today, 2500 years after the prophet Zachariah, 2000 years after the birth of Jesus, are not even enough for us to have with any more confidence, a complete understanding of what this all means.

The God who created. The God who served his creation. Completely. He became that which we could not so that he could do that which we could not. There is no other example in all of history that can even *approach* his service to us. There is no other example in all of history that can even *approach* the selflessness of God here on display. The God who created. The God who served his creation. Completely. Selflessly. And so I ask again, is 2500 years even long enough to fully comprehend God's act of service to his creation?

So we are left with this: what are we to do with his prophecy, today? How are we to explore this foretelling by Zechariah? And how are we to apply it to our world and our lives? We can view it academically and wonder how this prophecy might be explained. And we can use this answer like another log that we throw into the fire of faith that burns within us. And that is good; and that is well. And it helps us confirm our answer that God *is* powerful enough to free us from the bondage of sin. But how much does it help with the second question, the question of God's will and his *compassion* to free us? That! That requires a different view. One that is less cognitive. It requires something deeper, something much more personal. One that requires us to view God's activities within the scope of individual, within the scope of self. We have to separate the power and might of God over the entire universe with the care and attention that he pays to each individual. We have to hear the words of Zechariah as words that God speaks directly to us, today. We have to turn our ears and hear these words, words that were spoken thousands of years ago as words that are spoken today, by God, as we stand in his presence, as we live in his world with all of our personal troubles and personal pains and personal despairs that weighs heavy on our personal hearts. And when we do; when we listen to these words as a personal message from God, we can hear him speaking to us through his prophet. He is saying to us:

Dear child of mine, I am so in love with you that I will not send a soldier to free you but will send myself, in body. He will be my son; and he will save you. He will come wrapped in swaddling clothes, born lowly, and live a life equally as low. He will not come to overtake and conquer my creation but will come to serve it. And at the right time he will gather up the sins of *your* life, the guilt that continually weigh you down and he will place them upon

his shoulders. And he will suffer because of them, for your sake. This. This he will do. This is how he will serve you. And he will do it because he is obedient to me. He will sacrifice himself to save you. He will serve you because he loves you. And I love you and this is why I will send him.

You see, when we view the prophecy of Zechariah in this way we find that God is compassionate enough to save us. When we view it individually, personally, intimately, for that is what it truly is, we find that it is a call from God to us, before we were even born. It is a call from God to you - in love. It is a call from God to you - about love. Love that causes a God to serve you through his own suffering and death. It is a call from thousands of years ago that says, "Take heart, for before you I am, and before you I loved you. And because of you I died. And because of me you will live."

<pause>

What are we to do with it? If we can hear God's voice, *really* hear God's voice.... If we can hear him speaking to us through his prophet Zechariah, then we are called to respond to it. And that response is to model it, to serve like Jesus served. We cannot bear the sins of others; we cannot offer salvation to others. But we can serve others just as Jesus has served us. We can serve even when it causes us pain. We can serve even when it causes us humiliation. We can serve even when we have nothing to gain. We serve others because he first served us. We love our neighbors because he first loved us.

Let us, too, then go into the world, not mounted on our horse of self-esteem, self-power, self-judgement. Let us enter on a donkey, ready and willing to serve others even though it will bring us no earthly rewards. Is God compassionate enough to free us? We have answered that; are we compassionate enough to respond in kind to our neighbors? That is the question.

Please pray with me.

Lord,

From the cross we saw your power. From the cross we saw your compassion. From the cross we saw your love. And it was set in motion as you entered on a donkey, serving instead of overthrowing. Behold. We have a king and he has come to serve; he has come to save. Amen.