

Behold Your King

Zechariah 9:9-11

Series: Easter Series 2021

Preaching Date: March 28, 2021

Worship: Behold Your King

Key Sentence:

Behold the humble righteous king who brings salvation and a kingdom of peace

Outline:

I. Who is this king? (Zechariah 9:9)

II. What is his kingdom? (Zechariah 9:10)

III. How is it established? (Zechariah 9:11)

Zechariah 9:9–11 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.

¹⁰I 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.

¹¹As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Behold Your King Zechariah 9:9-11

In 1886 there was a spontaneous celebration on Wall Street to celebrate the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty. Clerks in the Wall Street financial firms threw used ticker-tape and confetti from the fledgling stock-monitoring machines out their windows to float to the street below. From this event came the New York City ticker-tape parade, which has now honored over 200 military heroes, sports teams, political figures and celebrities. The parade for astronaut John Glenn in 1962 is deemed to have had the highest attendance of all. But my favorite was the Apollo 11 parade on August 13, 1969, which I did not attend but watched live on my family's first color TV. That parade was notable for its celebration of Neil Armstrong's "one small step for mankind," and of the plaque left behind on the lunar lander, "we came in peace for all mankind."

Today, on Palm Sunday, we remember another great and peaceful procession. There was no ticker tape at the triumphal entry, but there was great excitement over the arrival of one who was neither a military hero, a political figure nor even a celebrity in modern terms, but who was thought to be all these things by the exultant crowd. Today we want to look at that hero, the Lord Jesus Christ, and see that he is the humble righteous king who brings salvation and a kingdom of peace. Our text is the one quoted in Matthew's gospel for that occasion, Zechariah 9:9-11 which prophetically predicts not only that triumphal moment but his eternal reign of peace through the blood of his covenant.

Let's read the text and celebrate it. Zechariah 9:9-11 *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. ¹⁰I 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. ¹¹As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.*

Zechariah was one of the last prophets, writing after the Babylonian exile. He calls the people who have returned to the land to return as well to the Lord. Then, in a series of strange, compelling visions, he pictures the promises of God for the future, culminating in two great visions of the messiah. He is the king who comes gently to reign as a shepherd, but will return to reign as the sovereign lord. Our verses are the high point of the first messianic vision, the triumphal entry of a humble and righteous king who brings salvation.

Because Jesus Christ is King and is coming to reign we who are his subjects should rejoice. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!” The phrase “daughter of Zion” points to the people who surround Mount Zion and “daughter of Jerusalem” for the people of Jerusalem. They are called to rejoice, and so are we. For while God still has a special plan, I believe, for the redemption of the Jewish people and the Jewish nation, yet Paul tells us that we have been grafted into that plan and that nation, and the writer of Hebrews tells us we have come to Mount Zion to rejoice.

You may not feel you can be commanded to rejoice, today or any day. Yet Scripture is not shy about this. When God gave laws for Israel’s feasts he told them to gather at the place he would choose, Jerusalem, and “you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.” The Psalms say it over and over. David says, Psalm 9 “lift me from the gates of death that I may recount all your praises, that in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in your salvation.” Paul commands “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” “How can I be commanded to rejoice? You don’t know what I’ve been through this week.” It’s true that if our focus is on what we’ve been through or on the chaos of the world around us, we have cause for lament rather than rejoicing. Lament is legitimate. But if we focus on the king who came gently to rescue us, then it makes total sense to rejoice. When we fix our eyes on him, behold him, this is not a command that is difficult to obey.

“Behold, your king is coming to you.” This phrase could also be translated, “your king is coming for you,” that is, “for your benefit,” “on your behalf.” In that day Israel was under the domination of powerful foreign rulers. But this king had the power to deliver them. He had come on their behalf, if only they had known. Spiritually, we are under dominion as well, the domination of sin, unable to free ourselves. We need a king to come on our behalf as well.

This is the king we’re looking for. Zechariah says “righteous and having salvation is he.” I’m not sure why the English Standard Version goes all Yoda on us there, but what this means is that he is righteous and brings salvation. To be righteous is to be fully conformed to the character, commands and will of God. God himself is fully righteous. David says in Psalm 9 “The LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, ⁸and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.” The promised Messiah has that same fullness of righteousness. In Isaiah’s Christmas prophecy, we read of this child who will be born, this son who will be given that “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.”

As Isaiah describes the Messiah in Isaiah 11, we read that “with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.” Jesus is the righteous one who would come as king, not only righteous but just. The word means both things. He is not corrupt or exploitative like so many rulers. I looked up “the richest world leaders of all time,” and found at the top of the list Vladimir Putin. He may be worth \$200 billion dollars, which he has somehow amassed on a \$116,000 a year salary. It would take two million years, if he saved it all, to get to \$200 billion. Compare him to Donald Trump, who had about \$4.5 billion when he first ran for office. Much of the poverty and suffering in this world stems from corrupt leaders who have no regard for justice. But Jesus Christ will be just in the administration of His kingdom because He is righteous in His person. He is not out to take advantage of His subjects. He has their best interests at heart.

“He is righteous and has salvation.” The last verb is either passive – “he has been endowed with salvation” or reflexive “he himself is salvation.” In either case the underlying truth is that he offers salvation to his people. For the Jewish people, the salvation the Messiah would bring had national overtones. For centuries, the Jews had been subjected to hostile nations. When God promised them a deliverer, they envisioned one who would reign on David’s throne and bring “salvation from all our enemies, and from the hand of those who hate us” Yet at the same time, salvation also had a personal dimension, individual deliverance from God’s judgment of sin. Thus the father of John the Baptist prophesied the Lord would come “to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.” Or, as the angel told Joseph, “you shall call His name Jesus, for he who will save his people from their sins.” It is this saving work that he performed in his first coming. By his blood of the covenant, as we’ll see in a moment he paid the price of sin and separation, and by faith we receive the salvation he offers as a free gift.

So look folks, your king is coming, and has now come. He is righteous and he brings salvation. But he comes, still verse 9, “humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” The word “humble” has a wonderfully wide range of meaning in Scripture. The Hebrew word is translated poor, in the financial sense, and also needy, but most often afflicted or oppressed. This king who we behold has humbled himself. For God to become man is humility enough, but now to ride in not to claim an earthly kingdom but to submit himself to the hands of evil men for suffering and death, even death on a cross, that is the ultimate humility. Charles Spurgeon pointed out that no false Messiah has ever copied Jesus in this taking the low place of a servant.

But he commanded us to follow Him in this regard. After He took the towel and basin and washed the disciples' feet, He said, "I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" Scripture warns us not to think too highly of ourselves, Romans 12:3, and to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves," Philippians 2:3. We've seen this humility in the Sermon on the Mount these last weeks. We are called to be poor in spirit, we are called to be meek, we are called to love our enemies. But our culture wants us to look at ourselves, to embrace as our purpose looking within, defining ourselves, then living out that self-expression and self-authentication with the approval of the culture – no matter how harmful our choices may be. When I showed this to one of the teens here in the church he said "Oh, that's Disney." But our hero, King Jesus, was not a Disney princess. He humbled himself to death for the sake of serving others.

So he is the king of righteousness; he is the king of salvation; he is the king of humility and he comes to Zion, to Jerusalem, to the world "riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This is humility. The prophesied messiah is not riding in on a war horse, as Alexander the Great did in the years after this prophecy was written, as most kings would, to conquer a city, or as Jesus himself will in the last day. He rides on a humble donkey, in fact on a young donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. Occasionally in Scripture someone does come in peace on a donkey. The most prominent example is Solomon, who rode in to be anointed as king on a donkey, or possibly a mule. It was a time of peace and he came in peace and his name means peace.

Jesus fulfilled this prophecy of riding into the city on the foal of a donkey on Palm Sunday. The Matthew account, which we read earlier, says "Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" Notice two things about Matthew's use of our text. First, it was planned by Jesus. "Go and find this colt." Carson says "Jesus arranged for the ride. The applause and the crowds were not manipulated; they would have occurred in any case. But the ride on a colt, because it was planned, could only be an acted parable, a deliberate act of symbolic self-disclosure for those with eyes to see."

Second, Jesus uses the word “Lord” to refer to himself. At the end of his ministry Jesus reveals himself with increasing clarity, asserting that “when you say ‘Lord,’ you are talking about me.” He can’t be referring to himself as ‘sir’ here. He can’t be calling himself these random strangers’ master. The only remaining meaning of “Lord” is divine. He’s asserting his authority as God, the ultimate master, the king, who has the right to demand anything of anyone. “So the disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.” He didn’t sit on two animals, he sat on the multiple cloaks that were on the foal.

And the crowd “goes wild,” as a sports announcer would say. The crowd goes wild. Matthew 21:8 “Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” They recognized the significance of Jesus’ approach on this cloak covered foal of a donkey. They see this humble man as the long promised Messiah. They may even have remember the Zechariah prophecy. They call him the Son of David, the one who would reign on David’s throne. They say “Blessed is he who comes ‘in the name of the Lord’,” that is, as God’s representative. They know he comes for salvation as they yell “Hosanna in the Highest.” Hosanna means “O, Lord, Save.” And still today when you look at Jesus you behold your king. The king who came for us. The king who came in righteousness, the king who came to save us. The king who came humbly. That’s my king. Is that your king? I hope he is. He is worthy.

If that’s your king, what kind of a kingdom did he bring? What kind of kingdom does he bring? What kind of kingdom will he bring? Verse 10: “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.” To put it simply, the answer to the question “what kind of kingdom does he bring” is “a kingdom of peace.” He is a king of peace and he brings a kingdom of peace.

He establishes this kingdom first by disarming the nations, even his own nations of their chariots, their war horses, their bows. The chariot was emblematic of the armies of the northern Jewish kingdom, Israel or Ephraim. The war horse, by contrast, was emblematic of the southern kingdom, Judah and Jerusalem. The battle bow was the third dominating weapon of war in those centuries, used with great effect by the Assyrians, the Scythians, and the Cretans, who were mercenaries for both the Greeks and the Romans. It is likely that the battle bow mentioned in this verse was the compound bow common to the Cretans.

All these weapons will be removed when the king comes, when he comes again. All the nations of the world will disarm. Isaiah 2: It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills. All the nations shall flow to it, ³and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” In the second coming of Christ there will be peace for the whole world.

That’s what Zechariah says: “he shall speak peace to the nations.” He is a king of peace and he brings a kingdom of peace. That peace is not just the absence of warfare, but it is shalom, human flourishing, a peace that is richness of life for all, richness of community and richness of personal well-being. As you look around in this chaotic and broken world, you don’t often see this peace. You don’t often see it in individual lives, don’t see it in families, don’t see it in communities, you don’t see it in nations. Why? Three things. First, the king brought the peace, achieved the peace, and we can receive the peace. Second, the world has yet to embrace the king’s peace. But, third, the king will come again and disarm the world as Zechariah promises. Then there will be peace.

Let’s tie each of these to Scripture, briefly. First the king achieved peace for believers. In Romans Paul culminates his argument for the saving work of Christ by saying “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We sinners, we rebels, we who shook our fists at God now have peace with God through the work of Christ. In Ephesians Paul says that this brings even Jewish and Gentile believers together. We can have peace with one another in Christ. Finally, we can have peace within. Paul says that as we pray, casting our cares upon the Lord, and as we practice, living according to the models he’s provided, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,” and “the God of peace will be with you.”

Second, the world has not accepted this peace. The Jewish leaders in Jesus’ day rejected him and condemned him. They tried him and crucified him. He offered them peace and they would not accept. And despite his sacrifice and his victory he has not yet imposed peace on the world. Individuals like you and me can receive it, but the vast majority of people and nations have not and the world has continued to be violent and oppressive and dehumanizing.

But, third, he will come again to do away with sin, death and evil, to create the world that he promised, the world of peace and righteousness. The promise has not failed. We wait for its final fulfillment. The kingdom is and will be a kingdom of peace, brought about by the sacrifice and resurrection of the king of peace.

This is where Zechariah goes in verse 11: “As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.” The key phrase there is the blood of the covenant. The blood of the covenant rescues us from the waterless pit of sin and death and lifts us up into the kingdom and into relationship with the king. In the Old Testament, of course, the blood of the covenant referred to the shedding of blood in the sacrificial system that established, maintained and exemplified the path to relationship with God. God had said “build this tabernacle, cleanse it with the blood of these sacrifices, and offer these sacrifices for sin and these sacrifices for fellowship and these sacrifices for atonement and these sacrifices for rescue.” But all the sacrifices of the Old Testament only pointed forward toward the sacrifice and victory that we will celebrate this week.

On Thursday we will explore the truth that Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us. It is the sacrifice of Christ, his blood shed on the cross that rescues and saves and brings us into right relationship with God as Father, Son and indwelling Holy Spirit. If we had time we could go to chapter 9 of the book of Hebrews and read exactly how the blood of Christ is related to the blood of the covenant in the law of Moses. Hebrews 9:22 summarizes by saying “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Hebrews 9:13 says “For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” This is the promise of Zechariah 9:11, that by the blood of the covenant we would be rescued, set free. This is exactly what Jesus said. Every other week when we share the Lord’s supper we hear him say “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” It is the sacrifice of our righteous and humble king that achieves salvation for us.

Zechariah says he rescues us from the waterless pit. That’s an Old Testament image of our plight. The pit is the place where sinners go. It’s used in the Psalms in parallel to the word Sheol. And God is the only one who can rescue from the pit. David says “O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.”

And later he ties that image together with forgiveness. Psalm 103 “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! ²Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.” This is the work by which our humble king establishes his kingdom of peace: he rescues us from the pit, he forgives us and he brings us into his steadfast love and his mercy.

So Jesus rides into Jerusalem, righteous and bringing salvation, humble and coming in peace on the foal of a donkey. But it is not yet time for him to take up his kingdom because this crucial work of sacrifice must be performed first, the blood of the covenant must be shed before the kingdom can be established. Resurrection must break victoriously into this broken world before the king can take up his rule and his obedient subjects can receive the benefits of the kingdom. The rest of this week we will consider that he gave his life for us. We will celebrate that he rose victorious over sin and death; that he ascended to his throne in heaven for us; that he rules and reign as the humble, righteous king who brings us salvation. Let’s be radical here and celebrate by playing our traditional Easter video a whole week early. S. M. Lockridge “That’s My King.” We’ll follow it with a lyric video, a great Palm Sunday song of celebration, “The King He Comes,” by Ike Ndolo.

The Bible says “My king is the King of the Jews; He's the King of Israel; He's the King of Righteousness; He's the King of the Ages; He's the King of Heaven; He's the King of Glory; He's the King of Kings; and He is the Lord of Lords. Now that's my King! I wonder if you know him

My king is a sovereign king. No means of measure can define His limitless love. He's enduringly strong; He's entirely sincere; He's eternally steadfast; He's immortally graceful; He's imperially powerful; He's impartially merciful; Do you know him? He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world. He's god's son; He's a sinner's savior; He's the centerpiece of civilization; He's unparalleled; He's unprecedented.

He is the loftiest idea in literature. He's the highest personality in philosophy. He's the fundamental doctrine of theology. He's the only one qualified to be an all sufficient Savior. I wonder if you know him today.

He supplies strength for the weak. He's available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and he saves. He strengthens and sustains. He guards and he guides. He heals the sick. He cleansed the lepers. He forgives sinners. He discharges debtors. He delivers captives. He defends the feeble. He blesses

the young. He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged. He rewards the diligent. And he beautifies the meager. I wonder if you know him?

He's the key to knowledge; He's a wellspring of wisdom; He's a doorway of deliverance; He's the pathway of peace; He's the roadway of righteousness; He's the highway of holiness; He's the gateway of glory Do you know him?

Well . . . His life is matchless; His goodness is limitless; His mercy is everlasting; His love never changes; His word is enough; His grace is sufficient; His reign is righteous; His yoke is easy; And his burden is light. I wish I could describe him to you.

Yes. He's indescribable; He's incomprehensible; He's invincible; He's irresistible; You can't get him out of your mind; You can't get him off of our hands; You can't outlive him and you can't live without him.

Well the Pharisees couldn't stand him, but they found out they couldn't stop him. Pilate couldn't find him any fault him. Herod couldn't kill him. Death couldn't handle him. And the grave couldn't hold him

Yeah, that's my king, that's my king, amen!