

Zechariah 9:9–12 (NKJV)

9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. **10** I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.’ **11** “As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. **12** Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare That I will restore double to you.

NO FOOLING, YOUR KING RIDES TO VICTORY.

April Fools Day all about playing jokes. Maybe you recall that certain April 1 where someone got you good. This day often leaves a person skeptical – wondering what prank lies around the corner. As we consider the words of our text, to some, the picture presented may seem like a joke. A king on a donkey, overtaking chariots and horses of war?

Is someone trying to fool you? Our text reveals of a mighty king bringing deliverance and victory. It pictures one who faces chariots, mighty archers and seasoned warriors. He approaches legions of horse-mounted riders. It pictures us held captive at the hands of this foreign ruler - prisoners. Who will come to our aid? Upon whom does our freedom depend? (**v.9**)

As Our Lord rode into Jerusalem, what victory could He bring? Where is His army? Where are His mighty warriors? Our text draws this picture. In the distance stand the mighty chariots and horse bound riders of the enemy. And on the crest of the Mount of Olives appears one lone rider. And of all things He sits upon a donkey – farming equipment, a cargo carrier.

Let us recall the words of Zechariah backing up to chapter 4 – He will bring the mountains low – “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit.” This is no joke. No April fools today. Your King, seated upon a donkey, unarmed, with no warriors behind Him, rides to victory.

Let’s compare this picture to the present day. For us today, this would be like America facing WWII and our leader rides into a battalion of tanks upon a bicycle.

But this is just the way God had scripted it. This is how the Lord accomplishes victory – Not by might, not by power, but by lowliness. In humility, our King rides to face the enemy – no fooling.

Those gathering for the feast of Passover recognized the significance. Psalm 118 was used for our first Scripture reading. This Psalm was sung at the time of Passover in order to give thanks for national deliverance. Hence, the shout of “Hosanna” which means, “Save now!” It is said that by Jesus’ time the phrase, “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” was understood to refer to the Messiah Himself. They looked to this Man riding into Jerusalem upon a donkey as the One who would bring them liberation. But did Jesus bring the liberation they expected?

Since the 1960’s in our own country, there has been an increasingly prevalent belief in our country in nonviolent resistance. In light of the shooting in Florida we see much protesting, many nonviolent resisters. We wonder, can nonviolent resistance bring peace? Will it bring solutions?

What is even more amazing than the thought of peace through nonviolent resistance, is peace through nonviolent submission. As Hosea writes, “**Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, Will save them by the Lord their God, And will not save them by bow, Nor by sword or battle, By horses or horsemen.**”” (Hosea 1:7) God is not going to solve this world’s wars and violence by means of more war and violence. He is not going to conquer the curse of sin with resistance, but with submission.

We are so used to resisting. We are so accustomed to wanting vindication. When we are wronged, we want it made right. How often are we able to just accept having been wronged? Whereas Jesus speaks peace, we often speak conflict. We increase the tension by our words and actions. Rarely is our resistance nonviolent. ... toward our spouse or child who have come up short of our selfish needs – toward our neighbor who keeps blowing his grass clippings onto our sidewalk – toward our God who has not let things unfold the way we wanted them to. Even in our peace seeking efforts, we sometimes remain angry at the other side that they are not seeing our side. We want to be vindicated. We speak conflict. We are sinful.

(v.10a) No longer will violent conflict and warring resistance be found among God’s people. Jesus rides into the enemies camp nonviolent submission. Our Savior’s passive obedience is the weapon of God’s warfare against sin. God could have easily let swing the hammer of His almighty wrath and destroyed sin in all its forms. But guess who would have been destroyed with sin? It is not as if sin is some separate person outside of me. No sin is in us. Sin is here because of us. Jesus had to break the battle bow of death by letting it stick Him in the heart. This is His passive obedience. Jesus said in our second Scripture reading, “**“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.”**”” (John 12:27–28)

In 1 Corinthians, Paul calls this foolishness to the world. What He means is that being saved by grace is something that has no place in our natural way of thinking. By nature we operate under an April fools joke. To think that there is some work that I can offer God to make Him desire to save me is fooling myself. And we don’t want the punch

line. For the punch that is dealt when relying on ourselves is the sentence of the Law. The punch line is death.

There is no fooling God when it comes to our sins. And so God saw fit to put to shame the wisdom of man. He took our future out of our hands and saved us by the foolishness of grace. **“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;”** (1 Corinthians 1:27) ... **“that no flesh should glory in His presence.”** (1 Corinthians 1:29)

No fooling – Your King does ride to victory.

“He is just and having salvation.” The word “just” means “righteous” and the word “salvation” means deliverance. He comes with no false motive in His mind. How many kings of the world can claim this? How many rulers, presidents, dictators, can claim to have perfectly pure motives for their people? ... no selfish ambitions.

Jesus has given Himself for you. He has sealed your salvation with His own blood and this is the living proof. (v.11). The blood of the covenant is something which God does not forget. It is behind His every motive and gracious intent for you. The blood that Christ shed for you gives to us that salvation.

(v.11b,12). At the time of Zechariah’s ministry, the Israelites had just returned from captivity in Babylon. Still though they remained under the sway of the Babylonian rulers. Still they found foreign power influencing their lives. Still they saw foreign soldiers in Jerusalem. The foreign powers would never really leave Jerusalem. Following the Babylonian power would come Persian power. Following that would come the Greeks. By the time of Jesus the Romans had taken rule of the Middle East. And following Jesus would come the ruin of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. What freedom?

Jesus did not come with a political agenda. His war was not of this world. He did not come to conquer the Romans. Rather He came to give us freedom from death.

The waterless pit mentioned in our text is describing how cisterns would be emptied of water and used for prisons. Have you ever felt like you were in one of those cisterns? Have you look up from the bottom of a huge pit with no footholds to climb out? Wether it is the cistern of your own sins which mount walls all around as you starve – Or it is the physical curses that this world builds around you that make you feel trapped and alone – Our King rides to victory. **(v.12).** There is only one way out. Without footholds, without a rope, without a ladder, someone must come to your aid. Someone must extend a hand.

Jesus calls you, literally, “the captives of the hope.” That is because you have the hope. You see the hand that has reached in to lift you out. “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Sometimes on April fools, you find yourself skeptical that around every corner is a joke. If your child picks up his room or helps with dinner, you think, ... ok, what's the catch. The devil would have you think this is a joke. He would have you wallow in your own pity or denial. He would have you give in, to give up, to serve sin.

Well, don't let Satan play such mind tricks on you. Your King rides. You are not alone. Sin cannot hold you in prisoner. "Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. ... The Lord of armies. He is the King of glory."

"Return to the strongholds!" (v.12). Here is the freedom from the waterless pit. Find God's stronghold. Get behind His defenses. v.10 – **He speaks peace to the nation.** Here is the peace. Here is the defense and stronghold. God's Word. Jesus speaks peace to you. He speaks victory over death.

The Hebrew word for this is Shalom. It describes a wholeness, a healthiness, a soundness. As our text says, His rule stretches to the ends of the earth. There is no area of your life that Your King does not control and has not conquered.

This is no joke. There is no catch. Jesus rides to victory. There is not one sin that is left for you to atone. After all, God says "I will restore double to you." He has both freed you from the sentence of death against you and credited you with perfect life and holiness on account of Christ Jesus. Completeness. Think of this peace, this Shalom, like a great sigh of relief. The complete peace of heaven which awaits you.

(v.9a) Sometimes Lutherans are accused of not being cold or depressing or too strict. Others wonder if they can ever smile in their worship. There is good reason for a solemn approach to worship. We take our sins seriously. We don't ignore them. Sin is something that makes us sad. But let us not sell our Savior short. We should never confess our sins before God to sulk away in sorrow. We have reason to rejoice. We shout victory in the face of sin and death.

Holy Week becomes a bit of a balancing act. On the one hand we sorrow over the suffering and death, the crown of thorns, the scourging. We sorrow over our sins that caused this. But on the other hand we have much reason to rejoice, because through this suffering and submission to what we deserve, Jesus brought victory.

This victory is what we look ahead to as we consider our Lord's last Passover, surrounded by enemies on Maundy Thursday. This is what we look forward to as we consider our Lord facing the greatest foe - death on the cross. And this is the victory message I look forward to bringing you next Sunday as our Lord rises victorious from the grave.

Let us shout our songs of praise as we see our King riding onward. We lay out coats before Him as we acknowledge this lowly Jesus is King in our lives. Shout! Don't let

anyone think your King is just an April fools joke. – No fooling, your King of glory rides to victory. “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Amen.