

Were you able to make it to the Houston Astros victory parade? Downtown was packed, so maybe you didn't. I didn't. I got to see parts of it on TV, though, and it was impressive. Mayor Turner called it Houston's largest parade ever – over a million fans lined the streets in the downtown area. The champions were riding on a big fire truck, hoisting the world series trophy high in the air for all to see. Even some fighter jets flew overhead to welcome the winners.

If you didn't get to see it, don't worry. Today, you get to see one that's even greater. The prophet Zechariah describes Jesus' coming to Jerusalem just like that – a victory parade.

Of course, it might not seem impressive at first. The crowds that day were in the thousands, not millions. No fighter jets flying overhead to welcome Jesus...just peasant pilgrims with their palms and their praises. And he's not riding high on a fire truck – he comes low, on a young donkey, and a borrowed one at that. There doesn't seem to be much victory in this parade, either. Jesus comes with no trophy, has won no championships. And he's riding into a city where five days later he'll be rejected, abandoned by his followers, and crucified.

But 500 years before, God told his people through Zechariah to watch for their Savior-King to come in this way. Sure, it's a different kind of victory parade, but that's because, as Zechariah points out, Jesus is a different kind of king. And his coming gives you far greater reason to rejoice than a world series championship. Listen as he encourages you to Rejoice in your King! 1) In his unique character, 2) In his unique kingdom.

**⁹Rejoice 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.**

1. In his unique character

When God inspired Zechariah to pen these words, it didn't seem like Jerusalem had much to rejoice about. They had no king. 70 years earlier, the Babylonians had killed their final king and destroyed their city and led them off as captives to Babylon. After a change in power, they are now puppets of the Persians. And, sure, King Cyrus had let them return home – but they returned to ruins. Rebuilding wasn't easy. They lacked resources, had enemies on every side plotting their downfall. Yet Zechariah points them ahead to a King who would come, and his coming was cause for great rejoicing.

I mention it because – well, there are times in all of our lives when it seems like we have little to rejoice about. Family implodes, work is a struggle, friends turn against you. Maybe you're there this morning. So Zechariah says, **see**. See your King coming to you, Jesus. In him you have great joy, no matter what your earthly circumstances might be.

Christ the Lord Lutheran Church
Palm Sunday
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Pastor Abe Degner
Zechariah 9:9,10
“Rejoice in Your King!”

Because he’s a different kind of King. **See, your king comes to you, righteous**, Zechariah says. Israel had seen a lot of kings before, but none like this. Most of them were wicked and unbelieving. But even the handful of good, believing kings – David, Hezekiah, Josiah – still have dark spots on their records. It’s really no different with rulers today. They’ll campaign on moral integrity, but we know they all have skeletons in their closets. We know, at least in part, they’re in it for themselves.

But this King is **righteous**. Do you see Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem that day? He comes with a spotless record. In the thirty-three years of earthly life he’s lived, he’s never sinned – never a word, action, or even thought that goes against God’s law. He comes with perfect love for God the Father and the people.

And earthly kings love to flex their muscles and display their glory. That, after all, is how they maintain their rule. But not this King. He comes **gentle**, humble, lowly. Do you see Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem? He is true God, King of heaven and earth – his power knows no limits. And yet the only use of it he made that day was in getting the donkey to ride. He comes not with angel armies, flexing his muscles, but in outward meekness and weakness.

But at first this King’s uniqueness doesn’t seem cause for rejoicing. Because when we look at his character, we quickly realize it’s not just other kings he’s so different from. It’s you and me.

After all, politicians aren’t the only ones with skeletons in their closets. How many sins in your past – and your present – would you be mortified if they were put on display for the world to see? But this King does see them. And he sees more: That even in our best moments, our righteousness doesn’t meet God’s standards. We are anything but righteous.

And we are not humble. We aren’t kings, but we often live as if we were our own lords. Seeking our own glory, not God’s – our own gain, not the good of others. Trying to keep power in our relationships so we can get what we want. Throwing off God’s rule in preference for what we think is best.

How would you expect a righteous king to come to unrighteous, rebellious subjects? Any earthly king would come with the punishment they deserved. Or he wouldn’t come at all – he’d wait for his subjects to come groveling to him.

But, rejoice! Shout for joy! Because this King is different. He knew we would never come to him on our own, so in love, he came to us instead. And he came not in power, with the punishment we deserved – he came in humility, with the salvation we don’t. **See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation**. Literally, he comes to you victorious. Because he’s already been fighting for you. Every moment of his perfectly righteous life until this point, he’s been living it in your place, and where we have all failed, Jesus has succeeded. The spotless record of righteousness God demands of you – Jesus won it for you, and brought it into Jerusalem with him on Palm Sunday, so he could give it to you through faith.

But he also rode into Jerusalem to see the fight through to the bitter end. Do you see how much he loves you as he rides in? He’s not the unwitting victim. He knows full well that his enemies in Jerusalem have already made plans to kill him. He knows full well that by riding in on a donkey, like God said the Messiah would, he was sealing his death sentence. That the suffering he’ll endure there goes beyond rejection and crucifixion – that he’ll endure hell on the cross for your sins and mine. But he also knows that’s what it will take to save you and me from it, and win us forgiveness and eternal life. And that’s why he’s come. So in love, he rides on, to finish the work. It’s a victory parade, because even before it happens, Jesus’ love and God’s promise guaranteed the outcome...and a resurrection on the third day.

So, rejoice! Shout for joy! Is there any greater reason for joy than your King’s love for you, and what he’s won for you? A life lived under Jesus in his kingdom, now and forever...

II. In his unique kingdom

And that's what Zechariah describes next: Jesus' kingdom. It's as unique as our King is, and it gives us even more reason to rejoice. God 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 past week, our president signed a government spending bill. One of the only reasons he said he did was because it will spend \$650 billion on bolstering our nation's military. At a time when relations with North Korea and Russia are ice-cold, it seems like a smart move. But what if he instead did what Zechariah describes here? Defunded the military, then destroyed all our tanks and fighter jets and every soldier's rifle? Doesn't sound smart. A kingdom with no army is open to attack from enemies.

Unless, of course, the enemies have already been defeated. Are you starting to see how beautiful Jesus' kingdom is? It's not an earthly kingdom, it's a spiritual one. But the war is over. The enemies already stand defeated. Sin, death, and hell were conquered by Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. When he comes back, he'll put the final nail in their coffin.

But until then, he's growing his kingdom. **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.** Again, see how unique his kingdom is! He doesn't grow it through conquest, but by proclaiming peace. It's the message of peace – peace with God, sins forgiven through Jesus' sacrifice – that he uses to win over human hearts and bring souls into his kingdom.

So, rejoice! Because Jesus has done this for you. He brought you into his kingdom, where you enjoy a unique peace that you can't find anywhere else in this world. It's the peace of knowing you don't have to strive to earn God's favor...Jesus earned it for you. Peace of knowing God won't punish you for your sins, because he already punished Jesus for them. Peace of God's promises that cover every aspect of your earthly life, promises that take away your worries and fears. Peace of knowing that when we take our last breath, we'll do so sins forgiven...and enter into the perfect peace of heaven. Peace to rejoice about...

And peace to share. So that others can know it, too...so Christ can extend his territory in the hearts of those who know him, and win the hearts of those who don't. Can you think of someone in your life like that? A friend or relative who doesn't know Jesus' peace? A member at church you haven't seen in a while, who needs to get back into God's Word? Take the time this week to give them a call or invite them in person to one of our Holy Week worship services. And come yourself, so your King can come and strengthen his rule in your heart.

Then look forward to his coming again. This time, it will look a bit more like a victory parade...in all his glory with angels in his train. Then you and I and every believer will join the victory celebration and rejoice greatly forever. Amen.