

Sixth Sunday in Lent
Zechariah 9:9-11
Lenten Sermons for Sinners
Shout!

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Winchester, VA
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**⁹ Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

**¹⁰ I will take away the chariots from Ephraim
and the warhorses 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.**

“Amazing! Just amazing! 500 years before it happened, the prophet Zechariah predicted the Messiah would come into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, actually the colt of a donkey, not even full grown and mature.” I read those words earlier this week and I found the skeptic inside of me asking, “Was it though? Was it really *that* amazing?” Jesus wasn’t a man who was unfamiliar with the Scriptures. Isn’t it possible that He knew what Zechariah had said, and sent His disciples ahead to get that donkey specifically to fulfill the prophecy? Does that count then? Is it cheating if you know about the prophecy ahead of time and you intentionally do things to make it come true? Then again, why would that make it any less amazing?

I don’t know... It’s probably dangerous letting you all into my head like that. I think I was getting a little too caught up on the donkey. And maybe we all do. Donkeys are interesting animals, they have a funny sounding name, and the way Zechariah repeats it, **riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey** just makes it stand out as important.

It is important. And it *is* amazing. It’s amazing that Jesus knew without being there, that in the village ahead of them His disciples would find that young colt tied up alongside its mother. It’s amazing that Jesus wasn’t simply responding to something that had been written half a millennium before, but that He was the one who had led Zechariah to announce those five hundred years earlier that He would be riding into Jerusalem that day on a donkey.

The donkey is important because it makes it so that you and I anyone else can look at this prophecy from Zechariah and the account we heard from Mark 11 and we can say, “Hey! This is what that was talking about! It’s Jesus! He’s the guy!” If the donkey part is true, then the rest must be too. And if we look at the rest of this prophecy from Zechariah, it really is amazing!

He starts off by telling us to **Rejoice greatly!** and to **Shout!** Why? Because the one who comes in riding on the donkey is our King. But just what is it about this King that’s worth shouting about?

There are four things Zechariah tells us about the King. The fourth one we’ve already mentioned, that He would come riding on a donkey, but the other three we have yet to discuss, and they’re the ones that I think are truly amazing.

The first is that this King is righteous. Now, is that something we would want in a king, or not? If there's one complaint that people have about government officials it usually isn't that they're too righteous. If we are to have a ruler or king, we want one who will be fair and not let unrighteousness or injustice go unanswered... at least, we'd like that to an extent.

We want a king who will stop the real bad people, the ones who leave package bombs on doorsteps, the ones who shoot children in our schools or who coerce women into the sex trade, the ones who use their power or position to leverage money away from less fortunate people, the ones who promote the widespread slaughter of unborn infants, those are the kinds of wrongs that we would like to see dealt with.

But what if there was a king so righteous that He dealt not only with such grand scale injustices but even with what we'd like to consider the more minor infractions? What if he was a king who upheld God's law instead of just the laws of the state? What if this king were so righteous that He intended to see any and every infraction of God's law that has been committed prosecuted to the fullest extent, enforcing the penalty of death that God held over those transgressions?

It's easy for us to feel righteous when we hold ourselves up against people who have committed sins that we haven't. That's why we do it. We don't feel so secure, though, when we hold ourselves up to God's law and see all the sins that we have committed. And, to be honest, the motivation behind our sins are the same as the motivations behind those great and terrible deeds of the "bad people" out there in the world. We hurt people—sometimes planning it more meticulously, other times lashing out without warning—simply because they've damaged or threatened our pride. We treat others at times like less than people considering not how much God loves them but how they might possibly be a benefit to us. We act selfishly, on the premise that we have the right to choose what is best for us even at the expense of others.

How then is the news that our coming King is righteous, news that would lead us to shout for joy? Shouldn't it actually fill us with terror? The prophet Jeremiah, who was a contemporary of Zechariah's gives a similar glimpse of this king. He writes, **The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up... a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which He will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.**

Yes, the King who rode in to Jerusalem on a donkey's colt is a righteous King. But He didn't come on a powerful war horse, point to His holiness and putting to the sword all who fail to live as rightly and justly as He. He came to save those who had lived broken, sinful, shame-filled lives by sharing His righteousness with them. That's the second thing Zechariah tells us about the king. He's victorious; He's full of salvation.

We shout for joy at the arrival of this King in Jerusalem because He came to bring victory and salvation to His people. Verse ten shows us that by "His people" we're talking about all nations from Israel to the ends of the earth.

What kind of victory do we want from a king? Again maybe we think of all the war and crime and bloodshed in this world and that's where we would love to have peace. How awesome would that be if there was peace between all the nations on earth. But, once again, this King knew better the kind of victory we really needed. Far more than a victory that would bring peace between worldly kingdoms, we needed a victory that would bring us peace with God. We needed salvation from our sins and from the death penalty that hangs over our heads because of them.

That's why Zechariah tells us to shout for joy as we see Jesus riding into Jerusalem. Because He was coming to bring us salvation and triumph, to give us His righteousness, to make us right with God. The last question then is, how would He do it?

That's the last piece of information Zechariah tells us about our King. He comes righteous and victorious but also lowly. He brings salvation and justice but in a manner unlike any other king we've ever known. Not with pomp and grandeur, chariots and horses, bows and arrows but with a quiet humility. That's why Jesus sent His disciples to bring back that donkey which He rode in to Jerusalem.

His entrance into Jerusalem that day was an announcement. "Here I am, your King. The time has come, the hour appointed long ago when I shall offer salvation and reconciliation to all nations. And I will do it lowly, humbly, not with a demonstration of great might and power, but with amazing, pure, self-sacrificing love.

The donkey reminds us how our Savior King humbled Himself. But later this week we'll see the truest symbol of His self-abasing love, the cross on which He gave His very life for us, where He exchanged His righteousness for our guilt, we'll see the depths of His lowliness with which He won salvation for us.

A donkey and a cross, not exactly the salvation bringing tools of your average king. And the same is still true today. What means, what tools would you expect the divine king of all creation might use to deliver the gifts of His amazing love to people? Some impressive relic, a golden chalice perhaps or a beautiful gemstone, something inspiring from the best this world has to offer?

Words written in a book, a few sprinkles of water, a bite of bread, a sip of wine. Through those lowly, everyday things, consider what He has done for you. It is through those humble means that He has come to announce to you, "Here I am, *your* King. I have come to bring you my righteousness and the victory of salvation from your sins." So as we gather to be served with God's lowly but majestic Means of Grace we join the saints and angels in shouting out in song:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Amen.