

Sixth Sunday in Lent – Psalm Sunday

April 9, 2017

Zechariah 9:9, 10

Zion's King will Come

Rev. George Ferch

Dear friends in Christ,

Wouldn't you like to know the future? The fact is we do. We know that God will give us every spiritual blessing in Christ. He will put daily bread on our tables. One day we will see Jesus' come again as he raises our bodies from the grave, or transforms our mortal bodies into glorious bodies in the twinkling of an eye. Obviously we do not know every detail but we have the big picture.

Zechariah wrote some surprising details about the future to his readers in post exilic Israel. The prophet wrote about the 30 pieces of silver the Sanhedrin gave Judas for betraying his Lord that later purchased the potter's field. He prophesied that the people will look upon the one they pierced. Zechariah wrote the words Jesus' spoke to Peter, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." [Mark 14:27]

One of the most well-known of Zechariah's prophecies is the one we see fulfilled in the gospel. The people knew God was going to send Zion's king to his people. They did not know exactly when. However, the prophet described what we call Palm Sunday and its purpose in surprising detail. Zechariah wrote to them that **Zion's King will Come**. He is righteous and having salvation. He brings peace and his rule from sea to sea.

Zion's coming king would be unique in his person and in his work. The witnesses of Jesus' ministry with its authoritative preaching, selfless compassion and obedience to God's will, and powerful miracles had every reason to praise Jesus as the fulfillment of Zechariah's words. The promised Messiah would be the holy God come into the flesh. He would come having salvation. This salvation was not rescue from earthly oppression but from the oppression of sin, guilt, death, and hell. Zion's king would come in the name of the Lord.

Jesus fit the description perfectly. He entered Jerusalem to the peoples' praises. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." A great deal of the accolades and praise the people who followed Jesus and who went out from the city to meet him offered were sincere. Our concern is not to conclude some were hypocritical, or see who got caught up in the mob mentality later in the week and cried out for Jesus' crucifixion.

God the Father saw to it that his Son received the glory that is his as the one who is righteous and having salvation. The people thanked God for keeping the promise Zechariah wrote down about the future. Jesus accepted their praise. When some of the Pharisees told our Savior to tell the people to stop as if their praise were misdirected, Jesus rebuked them. He deserved the praise and would have it. "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

The words “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest,” remind us of Christmas, don’t they? We are at peace with God and give glory to God for the birth of our Savior. Today, we see our Savior ride on in majesty even on a donkey. He rode to his death where he offered his righteousness and earned salvation for the entire world. Then, to rise again in triumph. On that road across the Kidron Valley between the Mt. of Olives and Jerusalem Christmas and Easter join hands on a carpet of garments and palm branches.

Zechariah wrote about that day to come in the future. Zion’s King will come. The king came in righteousness and having salvation as Paul wrote in our second lesson, “taking the very nature of a servant...he humbled himself and became obedient to death-even death on a cross.” He brings peace and his rule from sea to seas.

The prophet describes the peace we have with God in terms of earthly battle. “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.” This is common in prophetic literature. It is necessary we understand the meaning in spiritual terms. This is not the promise of some utopian or millennial kingdom of peace on earth. It is the peace of heart and conscience we have because of the cessation of enmity between God and us.

Because of our king’s righteousness and salvation our sins no longer separate us from God. God is not at war with us. We are not at war with God. Faith is knowing this and trusting in this peace. Our love for those who do not believe comes in part from our sadness seeing them continue to fight God in the false thought that God still is fighting against them. The peace we have is total in Christ. Zechariah described this peace as the total withdrawal and breaking of the tools of war. Sin caused our war with God. Christ as removed that barrier with the righteousness and salvation he brought into Jerusalem to offer up on Calvary.

The king proclaims that peace through us. The gospel of Christ’s redemption goes out to all. Christ’s rule of grace in hearts, the kingdom we pray will come among us also in the Lord’s Prayer, extends from sea to sea just as Zechariah said it would. This would have been quite a message to Israel right after the exile. The kingdom of God would extend beyond their nation. It would spread from the River, the Euphrates, “to the ends of the earth.” Christianity had its most immediate and rapid spread after Jesus ascension to the east.

Zechariah prophesied the future of the church in Jesus Christ who rode into Jerusalem to bring it all to pass. For the people who had faith in the prophet’s words, they had the benefit of Jesus’ salvation and rule in their hearts. They heard many details that connect this prophecy with Palm Sunday as its fulfillment.

We look forward to the future events God has promised through the evangelists and apostles about Jesus’ return in glory to judge the living and dead. They have written in great deal. We have the benefit of the things they wrote about if not the actual experience yet. When those things do come to pass, we can and will tie them together with today and sing eternal praise to God, “Peace in heaven and glory to the highest.” Amen. <SDG>