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Peace, Sun Prairie
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Palm Sunday, Lent 6
The Triumphal Entry of Our Lord

Zechariah 9:9-10

CHRIST IS A THRILLING KING!

Three, two, one, the buzzer goes off and swoosh! The ball goes through the hoop! Explosively, the crowd roars spilling out onto the basketball court, players hugging one another, other players being hoisted onto people's shoulders. For a few minutes jubilant anarchy fills the room. That jubilation, that glee, is what the Holy Spirit depicts for us in the ninth chapter of Zechariah when He says, *Rejoice greatly, Daughter of Zion! Shout! Daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your King is coming to you.*

The Jewish people to whom Zechariah preached had been removed from their fatherland for some 70 years. They were longing to go home. Armies from the ancient empire of Babylon had conquered Israel, destroyed their cities and carried away the people. Babylon's hub was located where present day Iraq is. Eventually, the Babylonian Empire collapsed and gave way to the Persian Empire. As the Persian emperor established himself, God put it into his mind to permit the Jewish people to migrate back to Israel if they wished.

From this time on, gone were the glory days of Israel such as what they enjoyed under King David or King Solomon. In fact, never again would they have a king of their own. Like a third-world satellite nation they would always be ruled by foreign powers.

But wait! There *would* yet be one more King of Israel. They should not give up hope. Through the prophet Zechariah God promised them that a national hero emerge who would bring about a glorious new kingdom. He would be a King. He would be a thrilling King. He would be the Messiah or Christ. They should rebuild Jerusalem and especially its Temple to make it ready to receive this new King. For He would give them reason to dance in the streets. On this Palm Sunday, let's consider the prophecy of Zechariah 9 to see what makes Christ a thrilling King.

First, Christ is a thrilling King because He comes to you. Zechariah wrote: *Rejoice greatly, Daughter of Zion! Shout! Daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your King is coming to you.* The Israelites would have recognized from this that the Christ God was promising them would be a different sort of king.

You see, the word "you" is not plural but singular -- "you, personally." Your King comes to you. How likely is it that a president, a governor, or even a local mayor would be able to do that? Would seek you out, come to you, your house and take a personal interest in you -- as though nobody else in the world mattered or existed but you? It would be humanly impossible to rule that way. But Christ is not like any earthly king.

Unfortunately, Jesus is often depicted as being up there in heaven, inviting us, but waiting for us to come to Him. But Christ doesn't wait around. He comes to you. He came to you at your baptism before you even knew what was happening and made you His own child. He reaches you through sermons, Bible readings, youth group discussions and talks at the kitchen table with Mom and Dad, through a Bible passage in your heart. Christ gives Himself personally to you, body and blood, under the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. He comes in such easy, tangible ways.

Just stop and ponder that sometime. We're so foolish that we often put these things off, neglect them or even avoid them. But here is Christ, the Great King, coming after you as though He is the beggar, looking for you

with His hat in His hand, pleading for you to be His citizen. It's not even as though we need to somehow make Him our King. He already calls Himself your King. Your King comes to you, He says.

Imagine if you could host your favorite president, whoever that would be, at your house. Wouldn't that be thrilling? Yet to you comes the King of kings. And He doesn't give up.

Christ is also a thrilling King because He comes to you not with bombast and fanfare, but humbly. Zechariah 9 says, *Look! Your King is coming to you. He is righteous and brings salvation. He is humble and is riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.* That's a mighty sad king who doesn't even ride a donkey, but a donkey's colt! And a borrowed one at that! From this the Jewish people had to realize that God was not promising them a military hero to establish an earthly nation. For who would jump for joy over a King riding on such a laughably pathetic beast of burden? What would be thrilling about that?

But the Christ came to win a different kind of battle. People are thrilled when they meet some celebrity that idolize and the person is congenial like a regular guy. "He's just like a regular guy!" they'll say. Our King Jesus is a regular guy like us –meaning, He is fully human, except that He was without sin. But it's not merely the affability of Jesus that thrills us. It's why He came so humbly.

The King Christ came to sacrifice His life to atone for the sins of the world. That was His deliberate purpose for riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Along with the crowd we cheer Him on. He owes us nothing, but He is such a dear Friend that He offers His own life to set us free from guilt, death, hell, satan and everything that harms us in any way. It's a thrilling King who loves His people that much.

Third, Christ is a thrilling King because of what He brings when He comes to us. He brings peace. Notice in Zechariah 9 how He removes the implements of war. *"I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken."* It wouldn't work for an earthly nation to get rid of all its weapons and military. The bad guys will surely run that nation over. But Christ comes to rule a different Kingdom in a different way. There'll be no need for weaponry because our war with God is over. God is no longer at odds with us. He takes our hearts captive to His rule not by fighting us, but by pardoning us. So Zechariah says, *"He will proclaim peace to the nations!"*

Thus God isn't out to punish us, judge us, be mad at us, or frighten us. That's not His objective. He declares peace because Christ has atoned for our sins and we are forgiven. Think of it, at a time when people are judged for not washing their hands and a pickup basketball game can be broken up by the police, the Great King of heaven who could damn us for so many more things declares flat out peace. At a time when, even before coronavirus, anxiety was the number one health issue, people can find peace in this King. It's thrilling that Christ our King.

His rule of peace reaches throughout the world. Zechariah 9 says, *His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the [Euphrates] River to the ends of the earth.* All who have faith in Christ are included in His Kingdom of peace. Christ has conquered hearts beyond every territorial border. It is thrilling to be part of a Kingdom that outnumbers and has outlasted any earthly kingdom in history. It will be thrilling to be part of that Kingdom in eternal glory.

Christ is a thrilling King. And as you march along with Him into the dark days of Holy Week, may it only enhance the thrill you experience in His Victory for you Easter Morning.