

Palm Sunday – Year B
Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
Zechariah 9:9,10
Pastor Paul Horn

April 5, 2009

Faith

You Have a Different Kind of King

I. Different in the way he comes

II. Different in the way he conquers

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king^a 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^b to the ends of the earth.

“It’s a cemetery.” That’s the answer given to people who visit the city of Jerusalem today and look out at the Mount of Olives just east of the city. The whole western side of the Mount of Olives facing Jerusalem is covered with thousands of rectangle shaped concrete boxes about 3 feet high and 2 feet wide and 4 feet long. It’s estimated there are 150,000 graves there. In the ground beneath each rectangular box is the body of a person buried with feet facing the city of Jerusalem. Above the ground inside the box the person’s soul is believed to reside. According to Jewish tradition, when the Messiah comes, he will appear first at the Mount of Olives. The dead people there will rise and then walk with him into the city of Jerusalem. This is why they are buried with feet facing the city, so they will be ready to follow the Messiah right through the “Beautiful Gate” in the east wall and into the city. Then it is believed that the Messiah will rule as king restoring Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple and reestablishing Israel as a great nation.

What the followers of the Jewish religion do not understand and refuse to accept is that the Messiah-King has already come. Two thousand years ago He came to Jerusalem and rode right through the Beautiful Gate and into the city. Some hailed Him as the Messiah and greeted Him as a king that day. But in the days that followed most rejected Him because He was not the kind of Messiah and King they expected. Yet He was exactly the kind of king God had promised and sinners need. Five-hundred years before the Messiah came, God described the Messiah-King through his prophet Zechariah. Here we see a picture of A DIFFERENT KIND OF KING. I. Different in the way He comes; II. Different in the way He conquers.

I. Different in the way he comes

“He’s coming!” “

“Do you see him yet?”

“No, not yet, but I see the crowd! Look, there he is!”
“On a bicycle?!”

Can you imagine the President of the most powerful nation on earth arriving in London for the G-20 Summit, the meeting of the most powerful heads of countries, on a bicycle? No! Or can you imagine, Kim Jong Il, the dictator of North Korea, riding into Pyongyang on a scooter? No! He flexes his military muscles by riding in on a parade, behind him military trucks pulling rockets, tanks rolling through the streets, the sound of thousands of boots hitting the pavement.

Jesus, the King, comes riding into Jerusalem, not on a royal steed, sitting on an expensive saddle. He comes on a lowly animal of peace. And the crowd that has traveled to the capital city to celebrate the Passover joyfully cheers Jesus on as He rides into the city on that first Palm Sunday. His humble appearance doesn't seem to bother them that day. But it doesn't take long for them to change their minds about Jesus. On Good Friday, when Jesus stood before them with a bloody crown of thorns pressed onto His head, their shouts of “Hosanna” changed to cries of “Crucify! Crucify!” They turned against Jesus because He did not come looking like the powerful king they were hoping for, a king who would deliver them from their Roman oppressors and restore their nation to greatness.

Do you wish that Jesus would show his power, flex his muscles, and show the world that he is the King of kings? Don't you wish that he would dethrone men like Kim Jong Il and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad? Don't you wish that he would swoop in like an eagle and pluck out all of the Al-Qaida and Taliban fighters? But he doesn't. Maybe he wouldn't go to that extreme, but he would certainly show a little power in your life, wouldn't he? You pray to your King to heal your sick family member's body. But he doesn't. You pray to your King to give you your job back, restore your financial conundrum, help you deal with a disobedient teenager, to take away your stress, to help resolve a struggling marriage...but he doesn't. We ask our King to provide for us the money for our new church building so we can build this summer, we ask him to bring back all of our inactive members. When our King does not demonstrate his power instantly, we turn on him, like the crowd in Jerusalem. We are quick to blame him when he does not answer immediately.

Jesus has a reason for not showing his power today just as he had a reason for not showing his power in Jerusalem. What if he had? What if the Son of God rode in, shining in all his glory, thunderbolts flashing, trumpets blasting, with a vast army of angels? The people would be razzled and dazzled, but not saved.... Instead, the Messiah-King rides humbly on a beast of burden, with shouts of children praising him, riding on coats draped over the donkey, followed by a small band of smelly fishermen, tax collectors and reformed prostitutes. Jesus rides in humbly, riding to his humiliating suffering, to suffer the punishment of our sins, when we've pointed the blame, when we have not trusted in him to act, when we grew impatient when he appeared to be slow to act. For those sins, Jesus rides in to serve us as our king, not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28).

Your King not show his power in your life immediately. What's more important? That you always get what you want from your King, or that your relationship with your King is strong? Your Almighty King does not remove every trouble from your life, but he promises to give you strength to endure those troubling times. He does not always give you what you want when you want it. He promises to give you what you need, when you need it. He does not always act quickly when we share his Word with someone, as quickly as we'd like him to, but he promises that his Word will work quietly through faithful preaching and teaching of the Gospel. Jesus is a different kind of King. He comes humble, meek and lowly. As king, how he conquers is very different.

II. Different in how he conquers

Kim Jong Il and North Korea and threatening to launch a rocket into space. Supposedly this is a test run to see if long range missile would reach the United States or its allies in the Middle East and Europe. Adolf Hitler's Nazi army used the blitzkrieg tactic in World War II, lightning quick attacks with tanks. In Desert Storm the media used propaganda against the enemy and claimed that Saddam Hussein's army was surrendering by the thousands because of the shock and awe of the might of American forces. Long-range rockets, Panzer tanks, A-10 fighters and B-2 bomber; these are what makes a nation strong and enables it to defend and enlarge its borders. Here in Zechariah, the prophet mentions chariots, war horses, the battle bow, used by kings in Bible times to conquer and expand their kingdoms.

But the prophet mentions these weapons in a very different way. God says the Messiah-King He sends is not going to use military might and force to extend His kingdom. He says, **"I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken."** And then He says of the Messiah, **"He will proclaim peace to the nations."** Not exactly what the Jews had in mind. The Jews praised Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem because they believed he would lead them to victory over the Romans. That's why they were waving palm branches. Palm branches were a sign of victory. He would be their King, of Davidic lineage no less, and do the same wonderful things King David of old once did. Today millennialists see Jesus as the same kind of King. They look forward to a so-called rapture and a supposed thousand year reign of Christ on earth. This is not going to happen. This is not the peace the prophet predicted would come. Jesus himself proved that this was not the kind of peace he would bring. Jesus rode into Jerusalem to bring peace that needed to be established between a world full of sinners and a holy, just God.

Because by nature we are enemies with God. Paul tells us in Romans that the sinful mind is hostile to God, it does not submit to God's law, nor does it have the ability to do so. (Rom 8:9) From the time we were born into this world, we wanted nothing to do with God and everything to do with ourselves. This is evidenced by our words, when we fail to speak up for others; in our thoughts, when we think thoughts of anger or jealousy; in our actions, when we fail to forgive each other. God is holy and demands perfection. He cannot have sinners stand in his presence without them perishing. As a result, he hates

the sin and the sinner and wants nothing to do them. What would have to happen to us to no longer be enemies of God?

North Korea, Iran and China... what would those nations have to do to remove their status as enemies of our country? Maybe their dictators would have to be removed and democracy, liberty and freedom established. Socialism might need to be replaced with capitalism. These actions might make those countries our friends.

In order for us to no longer be enemies with our Father in heaven, your King had to come and destroy his enemies: your sinful flesh, your sins, your death, Satan and hell. That is exactly why Christ rode into Jerusalem. He did not have nuclear warheads and weapons of mass destruction hanging from his donkey. But through his death, Christ took your sinful nature and killed it there on the cross. By his blood he purified you of all your sins (1John 1). By his death he defeated the power of sin, death. And by his resurrection from the grave he guaranteed that it was done. Through his death, Jesus brought peace between you and God, because he changed your status from enemy, to friend, from sinner to saint, from hell-bent and hell-bound to heaven-bound.

Through his Lord's Supper Jesus reassures you that this peace is yours personally. This same blood which we drink with this wine, this same body, which we eat with this bread, is offered to bring you peace; peace in your heart, now you know that you are at one with your Father; peace in your soul, you know that because you are forgiven you need not fear death, but will taunt death with the Apostle Paul, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1Cor 15:55) My victory and your victory is through Jesus Christ' blood. Indeed, you have a different kind of King, different in the way he conquers...by dying.

But not just for you, "**His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.**" Not with physical might, nor military presence, but, "**He will proclaim peace to the nations.**" Yes, it is through that all-powerful Word of God, described as a double-edged sword (Heb 4:12), dynamite (Rom 1:16), hammer that crushes rocks and fire (Jer 23:29) These words proclaim peace. Since he has now risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, he has given this task to you, to go out and conquer all nations, not through a crusade or inquisition, but armed with the weapons Christ gives you, to wage war against the forces of evil, to change hearts from the darkness of sin to the light of Christ, to bring peace to troubled souls, with the Gospel.

The Jews are still waiting. The Jews buried in those boxes have a big surprise waiting for them. When the Messiah returns, they will not march into the Holy Land. Jesus was not the king they were looking for. Many people today, sadly, are still looking for Jesus to be an earthly king. They, too, will be disappointed. But I have good news for you, my dear friends. You have a different kind of King. He marched triumphantly into Jerusalem. Although he was led out of Jerusalem as a criminal, he marched as a champion King to his cross, to win the victory over your sins, your sinful nature, and secure peace with your God. Your King marched triumphantly out of his grave, guaranteeing your victory over death. It doesn't matter which direction your feet are pointing when you are buried in the

ground. Your feet will rise to march to the Heavenly Jerusalem with your Savior King. It is right that we sing today, "All glory, laud and honor, to you, Redeemer, King!" Thank you, Jesus, for being our different kind of King. Amen.