

Sermon: Palm Sunday

Text: Zachariah 9:9-12

Theme: Your King comes!

Goal: The Kingdom of God is established by the humble and righteous King Jesus by the blood of His Covenant

Dear Friends,

Introduction: I'm always amazed by the prophecies of the Old Testament! Zachariah wrote this text 500 years before the Triumphal Entry of Jesus in Jerusalem; and it seems that he was like a reporter present there, or like a herald at the gate shouting to the people: "Your King comes to you! Rejoice!"

This prophecy helps to understand better what really happened at the Triumphal Entry. It was not just a special day that Jesus was welcome by the people; but it was the beginning of His enthronement ceremony, or His inauguration ceremony, as the King over the entire world. The processional ceremony, that began with palm branches and the festive shouting of the people, had its continuity on Good Friday, when He received a crown of thorns and a plaque: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews; and had its culmination on heaven, when He was seated at the right hand of God the Father and received a golden crown, and all the angels sang: "The kingdom of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

I – The humble King

The fact that Jesus rode a donkey is set by the prophet Zachariah in contrast with the war-horses from Jerusalem. King David and other leaders of the Old Testament used to ride a mule in times of peace. Horses were symbols of war and power. Jesus's Kingdom was not

established by the power of the sword neither by the power of human armies and horses. The people misunderstood some prophecies about the re-establishment of David's kingdom, thinking only of an earthly kingdom, with armies, palaces, ministers, pomp.... They had built up a false hope, and even the disciples became confused with their hope on Jesus. But Jesus was very clear about the essence of His kingdom when He said to Pilate: "My Kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my Kingdom is from another place... I am a King. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of the truth listens to me" (John 18:36,37).

It was necessary for Jesus to receive the crown of thorns first before He would receive the crown of glory, according to God's plan to rescue us from the hands of Satan. Paul wrote: "He (Jesus) humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8).

The humbleness of Jesus was seen as a weakness according to the pattern of the Romans and of the Jews. Even so, when He entered Jerusalem riding a donkey, without the *tramp of soldier's marching feet with banners and with drums*, (as we will sing it later) – (LSB 444), He received and accepted the acknowledgment of the people shouting: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:9,10). As He had first asked His disciples not to proclaim that He was the Messiah, now it was the right time to begin this proclamation: He was the suffering and at the same time the victorious Messiah promised by God! Therefore, "The Triumphal Entry!"

II – The righteous King

Jesus had a very specific goal when He came to establish His Kingdom: It was to be a Kingdom of righteousness. The world was full of unrighteousness, corruption and violence; it was hopeless and condemned. (Is there anything new under the sun???) Jesus came to establish a Kingdom among the earthly kingdoms, a kingdom without borders, an eternal kingdom, a spiritual one, where people can live in peace with God and in peace with each other – in spite of what was or is still happening around them (around us). And this is the Holy Christian Church – the Communion of the Saints, as we confess in the Creed, where we enjoy the real peace that flows from a forgiven heart. “He will proclaim peace to the nations.” Many martyrs gave their lives proclaiming this Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace, because they believed that a better life was waiting for them in heaven. No one lives for ever on this earth; in spite of the riches of many powerful men, all pass away some day, from the most simple to the most important. Our life time is the time God gives us to provide our entrance in His Eternal Kingdom of grace and righteousness. After this it is too late; and only darkness and suffering are waiting for those who reject God’s Kingdom and the King Jesus.

The prophet invites gently: “Rejoice greatly... and shout! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

The righteousness of God’s Kingdom is highlighted in many other prophecies as well. King David wrote: “The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light in the morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain, that brings the grass from the earth” (2 Samuel 23:3,4). Solomon wrote Psalm 72, a Messianic prayer: “Endow the king with your justice, O God, the

royal son with your righteousness. He will judge your people with righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice...He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations...He will rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth...May his name endure forever. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed" (Psalm 72:1,5,17). – This is the eternal righteous and universal Kingdom of Christ to which we belong!

The King Himself speaks through the prophet at the end of our text: "As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners... Return to your Fortress!" We enjoy the freedom and peace which God gives us when we take and eat the body and drink the blood of the New Covenant at the Altar of our Lord. Even if some are in doubt or astray, He invites: "Return to your Fortress!" –We sing, *A Mighty Fortress is our God* in the Reformation hymn. To Him shall we always come back!

Conclusion: We can rejoice and sing loud, in spite that we are in the Holy Week, remembering the suffering and death of our Saviour in quietness. We can rejoice and celebrate because we know that Jesus was not held by the tomb, but rose again on Easter Sunday. The sad part of His Enthronement Ceremony passed, and Easter opened a new scene, so that we can see the entire picture of God's plan. Therefore, we rejoice on Palm Sunday, receiving our humble and righteous King, and following Him through the cross to the glory, worshiping Him here and now, and once in heaven for all eternity. "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion, Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem. See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation." And we sing *Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest* as we approach the Altar to receive our King in the bread and the wine, His true body and blood. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 09 March 2017 (Adapted)