

Palm Sunday

In the name...

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.

¹⁰I 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} to the ends of the earth.

¹¹As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

¹²Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;
even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

*The thing we
celebrate today
was prophetic*

Those words were penned by Zechariah who lived some 500 years before Jesus burst upon the scene. Couple of things to note about this before I get preachy:

1. Zechariah is writing to exiles during the reign of Darius the Great. That means that his prophetic words are written for hopeless, worn-out people who haven't seen home in a while. They don't like their lives. For everyone in the room not loving every moment, the Gospel is for you today. Zechariah wrote this for you.
2. He's preaching to a people who, when they sit around the campfires, remember the glory days of Israel. They remember when the world paid tribute to King Solomon. Seems like yesterday. They remember that David put his own son Solomon on a mule to proclaim him King. Those thoughts that you have about a better world? Those are true thoughts. Those are right impulses. Have you impulses clarified by Zechariah today.

Not much has changed in 500 years. They've traded Darius for Herod. They've traded exile in foreign lands to exile in their own backyard—constantly watched in their own kitchens by a suspicious Rome. They've traded hopelessness for total accommodation and acceptance. But really not much has changed.

Oh, and they've traded Zechariah for a GREATER Zechariah. Some new prophet named Jesus from Nazareth just over the way in Galilee. He's talked about

deliverance and the like and raised a few eyebrows with a healing here and a sermon there.

Today, however, provides some clarity. The loose ends of the Old Testament seem braided together today. It's a bit late, as they'll find out later in the week, but it's there today. Something about the open gate in Jerusalem; something about that donkey....everything seems right in the world today. The planets align a bit on this road, even as a wooden cross is being fashioned up the street at Execution Carpenters Inc. It's as if they've stepped back from the trees of their daily lives to see an entire forest—a 2000 year old forest that's been growing all around them. The forest of the Gospel that began with Abraham. The moment's clarity is that of Romeo and Juliet. As Juliet rouses from the sleep of death and finds her lover dead from the poison and all is now known. All is now clear! It's too late! And she plunges the knife in her breast. Those few moments of perfect, still clarity about the truth. Here it is. For one entire afternoon, Israel gets it right. The King is acknowledged to be King! Unfortunately, he is soon to take the knife to his breast—he is soon to take the nails to his hands and feet.

On occasion of a donkey. The donkey brings clarity, and out come the palm branches and cloaks. But they usher in irony as well. This passage illustrates a very complicated thing called "irony." You've heard the word before. It's hard to define, and it has different expressions. The deepest irony is complex and oftentimes very rewarding to discover. You can also be ironic at a very simple level. Let me give you an example: sometimes when Olive Kate is playing in her room, and she has all of her doll stuff spread out over the entire upstairs of our house, and she and Esther are creating entire worlds and universes inside the tent in their room, and they're laughing and smiling, I will walk into their room and pretend to be very mad and I'll say, "stop smiling." Should they stop smiling? NO!! This is what smiling was created for!! When you are filled with the joys of playing family, God gave you a mouth that is able to smile in those moments! So when dad walks in and jokingly says, "stop smiling" at the very moment that you should be smiling, I am being ironic.

There is deeper irony at play here today. They are parading him in to his death without knowing. He's sitting atop his convertible with his Mr. Universe wave to the very people who will disown him in three days time. Ironic indeed. The King of the Jews finally recognized a few minutes before he's killed. This points us to the ultimate irony—the Gospel. Jesus became King of the Universe by first becoming a peasant. Jesus brought life into the world by dying. Jesus forgives sins by becoming sin for us. The Gospel is this: the tragic death of Jesus is ACTUALLY this: the last laugh is on the world. God's eternal and unending laughter that created the world and redeemed it, and is so powerful that it can shake the very foundations of the world, came through a cross, which doesn't seem very funny at all. God creates joy out of pain. God creates life out of death. Jesus is God's laughter in the midst of a sad and sin-filled world. Believe in Him.

1. Jubilee
door
2. functions
like a
rite of
passage
3. Jeep,
hikes,
4. Rate of
passage
is
deep.
have.
Proph.
jets
killed

At this altar, we usher in the King of the universe right into our mouths; right into our being. We say the words of Palm Sunday EVERY SUNDAY, because we have a good liturgy: "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." At this altar, it is his cloak that has been laid down for you—in fact, they gambled for it at the foot of the cross to make a way for sinners! At this altar, the old palm tree of the cross has burst forth with unending life for his people. Zechariah was talking about this all along. At this altar, He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea RIGHT HERE.

and from the River[®] to the ends of the earth RIGHT HERE.

¹¹As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit RIGHT HERE.

¹²Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope AT THIS ALTAR.
even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you RIGHT HERE.

In the name...

to return to
Zechariah