

Rev. Matthew Versemann
Trinity Lutheran Church
Decatur, Illinois
Palm Sunday
March 28th, 2021

EXPECTATIONS MEET REALITY

God's PEACE is ALWAYS YOURS in Jesus.

Hear the Word of God from Zechariah 9,

“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I 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. And His rule will extend from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

The Theme for our Lenten Series is: “Your Kingdom Come”.



And the Theme for our Palm Sunday sermon is: “Expectations Meet Reality”.

Expectations meet reality. The sandwich looked good on the menu. But it didn't look so good when it was served.



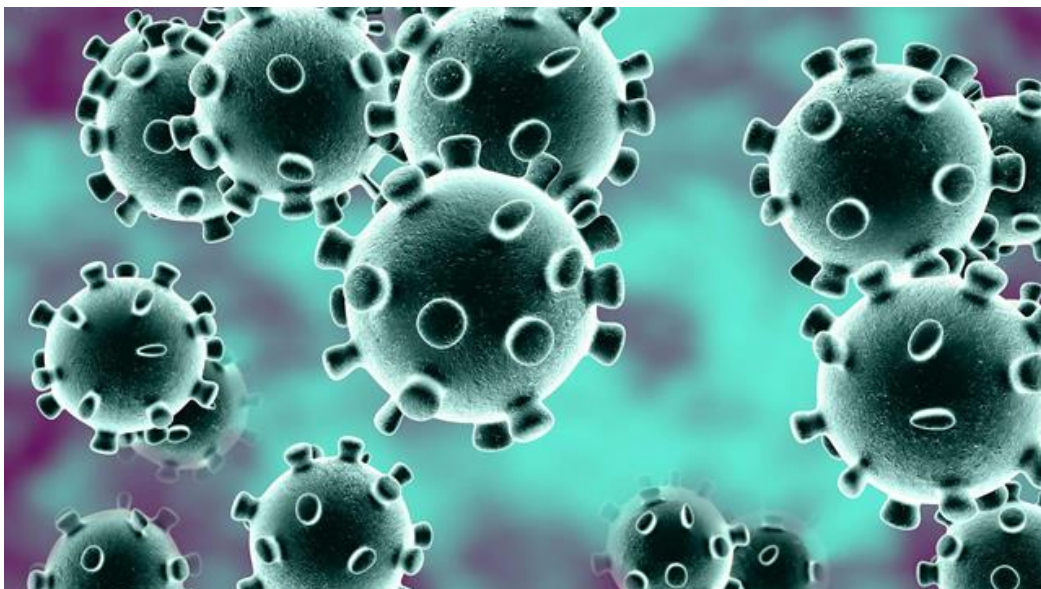
You thought you had taken a great picture. But now you want a retake.



You thought loading the car for the trip would be easy. But your children wanted to bring way too much stuff. Expectations meet reality.



You couldn't wait for spring break and the Florida sunshine. You were looking forward to graduation, and a great time with your family and friends. You were so excited for Holy Week—Maundy Thursday's Holy Communion, Good Friday's Tenebrae service, and Easter Morning's Hallelujahs. But then what? COVID-19 hit. Expectations meet reality.



That's what Palm Sunday is all about. Great expectations meet bitter realities.



Christ's Palm Sunday parade into Jerusalem wasn't the city's only parade that year. Roman historians tell us that the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, regularly held military parades—Roman cavalry and soldiers marching into Jerusalem.



Pontius Pilate would lead them on horseback. Each soldier was clad in leather armor. Their swords and spears were crafted from the hardest steel. Golden helmets gleamed in the sunlight. Drummers beat out the cadence of a mighty army. The message was clear. Peace comes through Roman military might and muscle. They called it *Pax Romana*—Roman peace.



On Palm Sunday, Christ's disciples expected Jesus to defeat Pilate and the Romans. That's why the crowd, shouted, "*Hosanna to the Son of David!*" The word "Hosanna" is a Hebrew word that means, "Save us now!" Hosanna was a cry for Jesus to save the Jews from Roman occupation. The crowd expected Jesus to demonstrate the military might and muscle of King David—Israel's greatest warrior. "*Hosanna to the Son of David!*" That's what they expected.

Zechariah 9:9

"Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King comes to you—
righteous and having salvation.
Humble and riding upon a donkey."

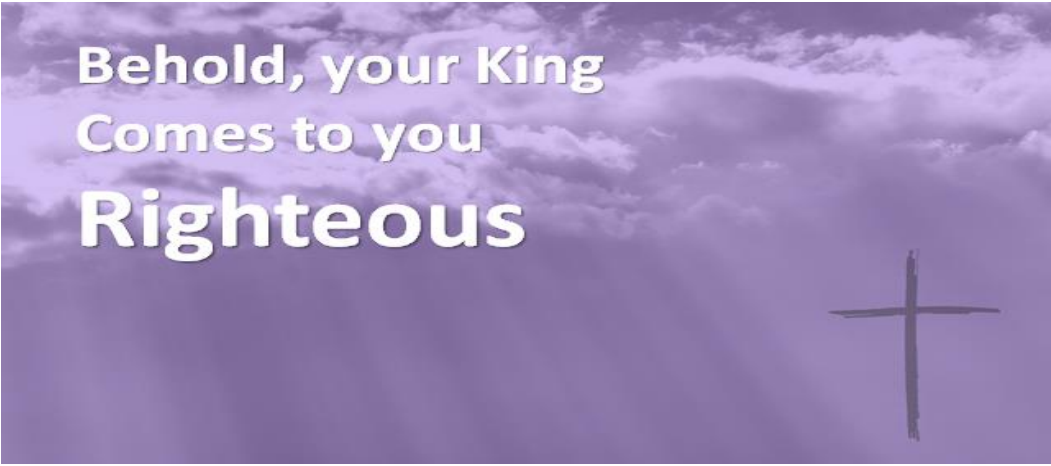
[Slide 8] Here's the reality. "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King comes to you—righteous and having salvation. Humble and riding on a donkey." (Zech 9:9) Let's unpack this verse.



Behold, your King—Behold is a command to “see,” “look,” “gaze.” “Behold” means, “This is what I’m trying to get you to see!” **Behold, your King.** The word “king” implies authority, power and might. This isn’t just a king, or the king. This is “*your* King.” Rejoice and shout aloud! Why?

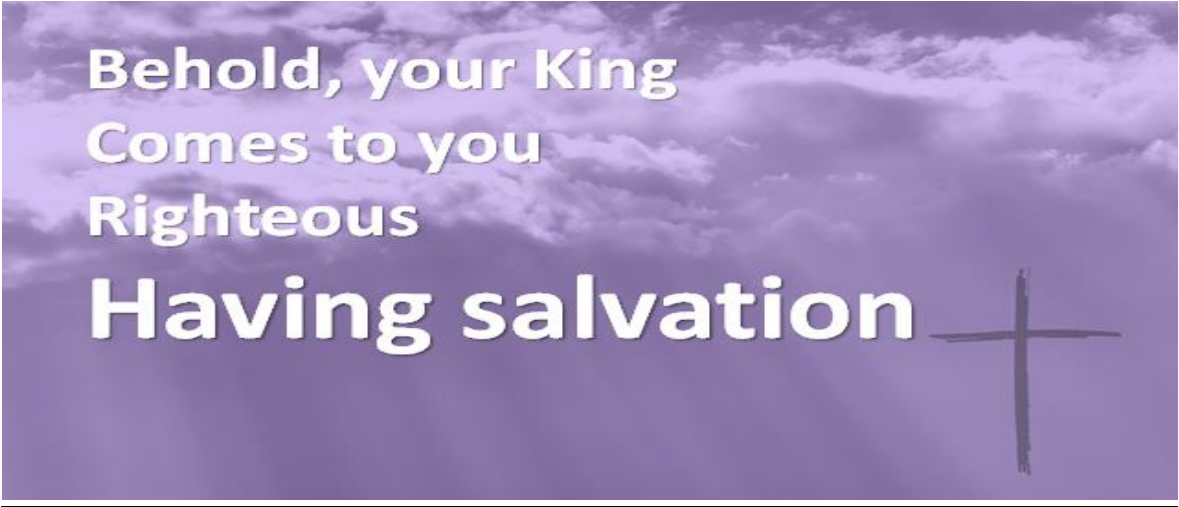


Your King comes to you—The “you” here is singular, not plural. It’s “you” not “all y’all,” like they say in Texas. A singular “you” denotes a focus that’s individual intimate, and personal. You are more than just a driver’s license or a Social security number. You are more than an unnamed creation, doomed to die and destined to be forgotten. Behold, your King, comes to you, personally.

A purple-tinted image of a sky with white clouds. A simple black cross is visible on the right side.

Behold, your King
Comes to you
Righteous

Righteous—Your King is righteous. “Righteous kings” in Israel’s history were an oxymoron — a fact often pointed out by the prophets. All nineteen of the northern kings of Israel were unbelievers, and evil. In the south, twelve out of twenty were unbelievers. But now, Zechariah announces, “*Behold your King comes to you, righteous.*”

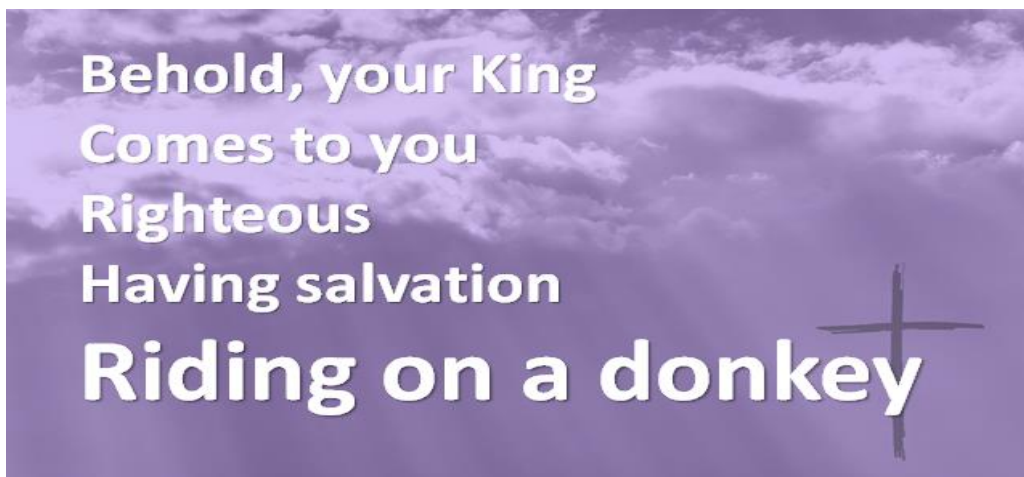
A purple-tinted image of a sky with white clouds. A simple black cross is visible on the right side.

Behold, your King
Comes to you
Righteous
Having salvation

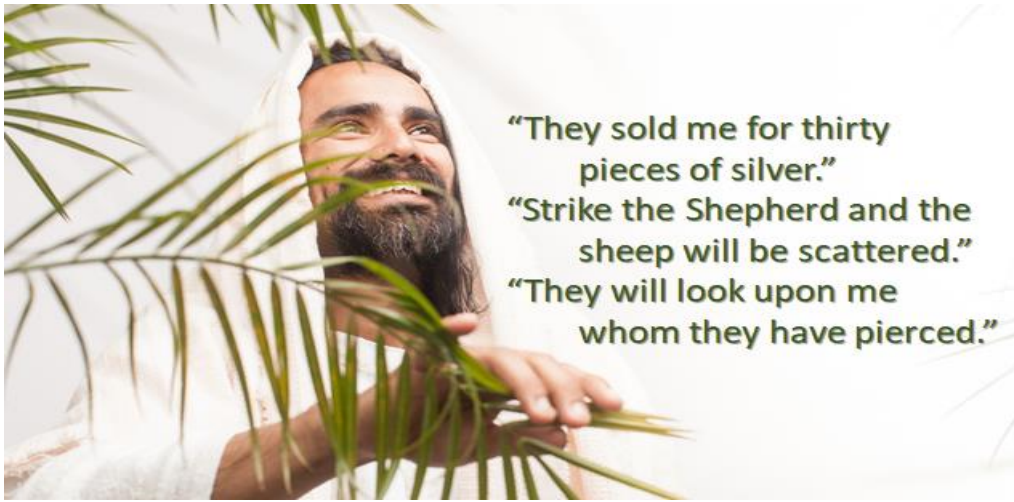
“*And having salvation*”—When you have something you can either keep it or give it away. Zechariah describes this King, your king, my king, as “Righteous, and having salvation”. But our king doesn’t keep His salvation. He gives it away. This King gives salvation away freely, generously, repeatedly, quickly, and eternally.



In fact, our Salvation has a name—***“You will give Him the Name, Jesus, which means Savior, because He will save His people from their sins.”*** Salvation also has a place—Golgotha, Calvary, the Skull. Salvation also has a day—Friday; namely, Good Friday, 30 AD. Salvation also has a time—from 9:00 in the morning, until 3:00 in the afternoon. Above all else, Salvation has a cost—the blood of God’s only Son. Salvation has nails, a hammer, a spear and a crown of thorns. ***Behold, your King, comes to you righteous having salvation***—and giving it away freely, generously, repeatedly, quickly, and eternally.



Your King comes to you, humble, and riding on a donkey—In the ancient Near East, a donkey was like the 1975 Ford Pinto - a lemon, a clunker, a total loser! That’s a donkey in antiquity. Horses and chariots were the winners. Horses and chariots meant military power and might. **Behold, your king comes to you, humble, and riding on a donkey.** Not a warhorse, not a stallion. No chariots, no army, no sword, no helmet, and no spear.

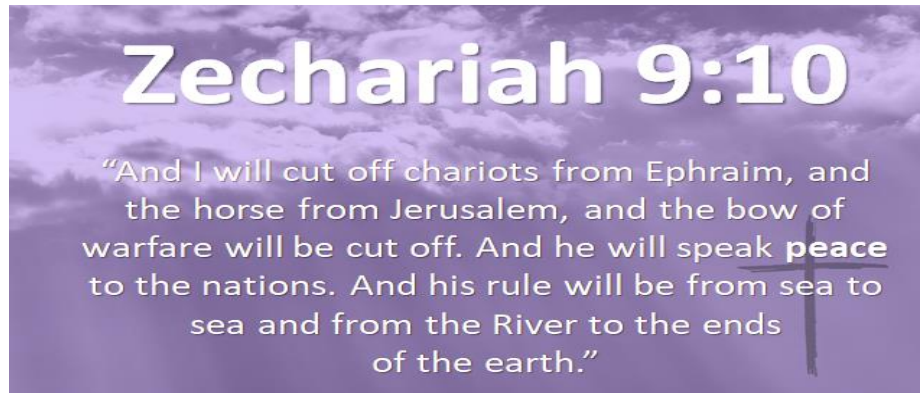


Our King is a whole different kind of King, who gives us a whole different kind of peace. He delivers peace with God. His forgiving blood has set everything right between you and God. God's peace, secured by Jesus' blood, calms our fears, forgives our sins, conquers our death, defeats the devil, shuts hell, opens heaven, unlocks our graves, raises our bodies, and gives our lives hope in the present, and paradise for eternity.

However, there was a cost in delivering God's peace to us. Here's how God delivered it: Zechariah 11:12, the King will be sold for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah 12:10, the King will be pierced with a spear and die. Zechariah 13:7, the King will be struck, and the sheep will scatter. Expectations (defeat Roman rule and give us paradise on earth) meets reality (Jesus dying on a God-forsaken cross).

By Friday of Holy Week, Jesus is hanging dead on a cross, under a sign that reads, in Matthew 27:37, "***This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.***" Sadly, many people who were looking for a king who would crush Rome, crush their diseases, and crush their poverty, gave up on King Jesus, even though Jesus did more crushing than we could have hoped for. He crushed Satan and sin, death and hell. But if all you're looking for is food in your belly, health in your body, and money in your pockets, Jesus' salvation often doesn't satisfy those "***whose minds are set on earthly things.***" But know this: Jesus is your Savior, and He died and rose again to give you peace with God, and to set everything right between you and God, so that God's not mad at you anymore. But since God is a giver, and not a forcer, you can either receive His gifts, or reject His gifts and continue to living in the poverty of your sins, death, and earthly mindedness, while you wait for some fairytale Savior.

Do you want proof that Jesus has delivered peace with God to you? Here's your proof. God turned the darkness of Good Friday into the light of Easter. God raised Jesus' dead body, in resurrection glory. God turned the gloom and doom of the cross, into the peace and salvation of Jesus' empty tomb. That's why Zechariah announces in Zechariah 9:10,



“I will cut off the chariots from Ephraim, and the horses from Jerusalem, and the bow for warfare will also be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations. And His rule will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”



Check out this picture. This is a picture of our lives not only because of CoVid, but also because of sin. Our lives, our families, and our world need the peace that Jesus died to give us more than ever! The pandemic has changed alot. Children are bored, and stir-crazy. Parents are frazzled. Many are paralyzed by fear, anxiety, and loneliness; often too paralyzed to live— even with a risen Savior. Anxiety imprisons. Social distancing isolates. Depression grows. Death stalks. *Yet, the reality is, death was already stalking you and me pre-CoVid, because all have sinned, and the wages of sin is death.* Sadly, CoVid has caused all of us to some degree, and some of us to a great degree, to “Hide” from the One Who already conquered our death,.

Finally, Zechariah declares, “***Your King comes...speaking peace to the nations!***” The word for peace is “shalom”. Shalom means ‘total restoration’. Shalom brings order out of chaos; good out of tragedy; hope out of despair, life out of death. All these chaotic strings you’re looking at, look at them now:



All of those random threads you just saw make up this beautiful Palm Sunday tapestry. *And this is what Jesus does for you and me.* Jesus takes all the random threads of our lives, and creates a beautiful, colorful, ordered, calming peace. So, what does it all mean?

It means pandemics, panic, and paranoia don’t rule you. It means that sin, shame, and satan won’t conquer you. It means devastation, depression and death don’t have the last word. Jesus has the last word. And His last word to you and me is: Peace. John 14:27, “***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.***” John 16:33, “***I have said these things to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulations. But take heart; I have overcome the world.***” John 20:25, “***Jesus came in, and stood among them on Easter evening, and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then He showed them His hands, and His side, and said, “Do not be afraid!”***



A dad took his 2 kids to buy a new bike for the oldest child. At the store, the 5-year old girl picked out a shiny new bike, with a banana seat, training wheels, and bell. At that point, the 3-year old boy thought he should get a new bike too. So dad said, *“Son, you’re still having problems riding your tricycle. A big-kid’s bike would bring you more pain than pleasure. Someday I’ll buy you a new bike—just not today.”* The boy looked up and asked, *“So I don’t get a new bike, daddy?”* *“That’s right, son, not today.”* So the boy said at the top of his lungs, *“Then I want a new daddy!”*



Let’s be honest. There are times when we want a new Savior. A Savior who instantly rights our wrongs, instantly heals our hurts, instantly delivers us from disease, depression, and death. But then, what happens? Expectations meet reality! The reality is that Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. The reality is prayers seem to go unanswered, hopes are dashed, and deliverance from pandemics and trials don’t come fast enough.



There’s so much we don’t have yet. But there’s so much more that we do have now! ***“Behold! Your King comes to you – personally – righteous, and having salvation, humble, and riding on a donkey; and bringing peace to His people.”*** The reality is that Jesus suffered, bled, and died to save us. Even when it looks like our rescue isn’t happening fast enough, or not at all, Jesus has already forgiven us. His shed blood has already won the war over our enemies. The curtain in the temple is already torn in two. Access into the Father’s family has already been granted. He’s already ripped the hinges off of His own grave, and by His resurrection He’s already conquered our death. He is already bestowing peace to His people, and His total restoration of all creation has begun and is continuing, until the last day, when Jesus’ Expectations of what He will give us will be reality. AMEN!