

SERMON FOR JULY 5, 2020

TEXT: ZECHARIAH 9: 9-12

THEME: EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, your king is coming to you;

righteous and having salvation is he,

humble and mounted on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the war horse from Jerusalem;

and the battle bow shall be cut off,

and he shall speak peace to the nations;

his rule shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your

prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;

today I declare that I will restore to you double.

In the name of Jesus:

Have your hopes been dashed this July 4 weekend? After all, this is a July 4 celebration like no other. July 4 is probably one of the most anticipated, decorated, and celebrated holidays of the summer. Families usually will hang American flags from their porch, All American bunting will be draped from the front porch rails, the streets of Lancaster would be lined with people three to

four deep awaiting the 4th of July parade, there would be cookouts, family gatherings, the Fairgrounds would be teeming with people, many jockeying for a spot to watch a thirty minute fireworks display. But that was last year, and the year before, not now, not this year. The anticipation and buildup for the celebration of this 4th of July is different, we have gotten our hopes up this 4th but the realities don't match up to our own expectations.

This isn't really a new phenomena, think back to how it was during the time of Zechariah. Jeremiah witnessed the fall of Israel and Judah, the deportation of God's people into exile, and he lamented the destruction of beloved Jerusalem. Zechariah began his ministry after Jeremiah. He had heard about the greatness of Israel, the power of King David, the wisdom of Solomon, the grandeur of a nation called God's people who the world looked up to. But that was a distant memory. The country was literally in ruins. Israel was blessed by God with an embarrassment of riches and blessings, but now because they rejected God Israel was now just an embarrassment. Expectations shattered. That was what it was like in Zechariah's day.

But a new day was about to dawn. Some of the exiles had returned to Jerusalem. The old city was starting to find life again. A wall around a city was being rebuilt. The Temple that was destroyed was also being rebuilt, into

what would be called the Second Temple, the Temple that our Savior would regularly go to to worship. There was finally hope on the horizon.

Expectations were building. Our text for today looks forward to that Day when God's promises once again would be fulfilled and the dreams of His people realized. And so, Zechariah is moved by the Spirit to write: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Do you think that God's people might have been getting their hopes up?

God fulfilled His promise. He sent His Son to be a new kind of king. Jesus would ride into Jerusalem, righteous and full of salvation. Riding on the back of a donkey, a beast of burden, a symbol of peace. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, children lined the streets for the Palm Sunday parade, palm branches were cut down and people waved them during the parade for Jesus, all the while saying: "Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Jesus was God's chosen One, who brought sight to the blind, healing to the sick, He raised the dead, this was God's Son, anointed by the Spirit, the Father proclaiming from heaven that everyone should listen to Him.

But expectations have a funny way of disappointing. Jesus was no earthly king. He was betrayed by Judas, tried by the Sanhedrin, condemned to die by Pilate. This King was rejected by the people He came to serve. Jesus revealed His true purpose as King, He came not to be served as earthly rulers are served, He came rather to give His life so that all who believe in Him would have life now and into eternity.

Yes, the hopes of the people were shattered as they saw Jesus hang on the cross suffered damnation from God. But Zechariah foretold that God was going to exceed man's expectations in the sending of His Son. Yes, Jesus died on the cross, but three days later He rose from the grave, defeating sin, Satan and death for all who believe in Him. Those in bondage to sin would be released, those held captive to guilt would be freed, those haunted by their past sins would be forgiven, all because of Jesus. And so Zechariah looked forward to that day, telling his hearers and you and me that we can rejoice, and be glad, “

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; for God says that today I declare that I will restore to you double.”

God exceeds expectations in sending Jesus to be our Savior and King. How blessed we are by Jesus, for God restores to us double, giving us even

more than what we can imagine in Jesus. The Kingdom of God has come, it is here among us, for the Kingdom of God comes even without our asking. We are a part of God's Kingdom by virtue of our Baptism. God exceeds our expectations by blessing us beyond what we can imagine or dream about.

The world looks at us and snickers. It doesn't look like we have a King. It doesn't look like we are blessed. And yet we rejoice and are glad! For God restores to us double! The world seeks an all powerful king, one who comes in pomp and circumstance. The world is impressed by the glitz and glamour. But God gives us Someone different in Jesus. Instead of coming to earth in a fiery chariot, He is humbly born in a manger. Jesus said He came not to be served but to serve. The world thinks that the death of Jesus is some type of cruel joke, but He who sits in the heavens has the last laugh. Our King comes to us on a cross, spat upon, rejected, and disfigured. Today our King Jesus is just plain dissed, and even His disciples were disappointed and dissatisfied.

Our God blesses, beyond our wildest dreams and exceeding our expectations. Sinners want a King, God gives us a Savior. We desire to live in peace, God gives us peace with Him surpasses all human understanding. We want a heaven here on earth, God gives us a heaven that lasts into eternity and the certainty of the resurrection of our mortal bodies to be like Christ's

glorious body. We seek to be cleansed, Jesus washes us in His blood and gives us new life in Baptism. We want something good to eat, Jesus feeds us with His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. We want Someone to lead and guide us, and God says that He is our ever present Help in times of trouble. We work to get a better life, God gives us eternal life in Jesus! We have our own set of expectations, and God exceeds our expectations in sending us His Son, Jesus. And so we can rejoice, and not be afraid to get our hopes up. Why? Because Jesus has come. And Jesus will come again. To take us home, to celebrate with Him and all the saints. And that Day will be glorious. It will exceed all of our expectations! So rejoice, and be glad because God never disappoints, and He gives us more than what we can ever expect. In the name of Jesus.

Amen