

Text: Zechariah 9:9,10.

Palm Sunday.

**March 20, 2016.**

Grace and peace are yours through our suffering Savior, Jesus. Amen.

Do you want to see a man get worked up? Put him in front of a TV with the game on. You'll hear shouting, yelling. At a glass screen! Put two guys in that room and you'll hear audible skin slaps on touchdowns, house-shaking groans at an interception, great rejoicing when the team is victorious! You want to hear a man shout, let him watch the game! You'll hear him shout!

Want to make a man quiet? Put a hymnal in front of him. Now, I know it's not everyone. But be honest, how many get pretty quiet when the singing starts? And how many who do sing, sing something like this, in your mind? "Hosanna, loud hosanna, when will this song be o'er? Lalalalala, it's going to take forever." Seriously, why do we get so worked up about games that really mean nothing, scream and shout and rejoice, and then for what really means something, praising God, we can barely bring ourselves to open our mouths? Sin keeps us from shouting. My own sin has me looking forward to March Madness more than I look forward to the joy beyond all sadness. My sin keeps me from great rejoicing. Your sin makes it hard to shout!

But see, your king comes. Your king. Your king! Your king came just for you. He is your personal king. He is really yours. His name is Jesus. He comes to you. He didn't stay distant in heaven to let you figure out the way there. He comes to you. For many of you, he came to you when you were too little to remember, at baptism. Maybe he even came to you before you were born as you heard the name Jesus, even in your mother's womb. Maybe today is the very first time you've ever heard about Jesus. Then right now, Jesus is coming to you. Right now, he is bringing you forgiveness for that sin that keeps you from shouting, that sinful condition that reserves great rejoicing for football or basketball. Jesus. He's your king. He comes to you.

Look at what kind of a king he is. He's righteous! Makes you want to shout! He's righteous. He has no sin. He committed no sin. We've seen in our Lenten services commandment after commandment after commandment, Jesus never sinned. Never disobeyed his parents, but always held them in love and respect. Was free from the love of money and so free to put others first. Was perfectly content to be our righteous Savior. See, that's the really cool part that Jesus, our King, is righteous. He took his perfect life and counted it as yours. He took his perfection and said here, "Have it! It's my free gift to you. I declare you not guilty. I declare you perfect. I declare you righteous, just like I am." Sound too good to be true? He's not only righteous. He's victorious! Victory! Yelled from the cross. It is finished! Your sin defeated, once and for all. Your sins paid in full, every single one! Victory! Over your sin. Shout it! Victory! Your sins do not count against you, only Jesus' holiness counts for you. Victory! From the empty grave. Victory! God said so. He keeps on giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Shout it out! Victory! Rejoice greatly! Victory! Yell like you are at a game. No! Yell louder than that, like you really mean it, like your eternal life and death depend on it! Victory! Victory! Victory!

You better shout it, because a lot of the time, you won't see it. When your king comes, he doesn't look like a king. He comes lowly. The word means bowed down, humble, poor. He had to borrow an animal for this victory parade and bring it back right away when he was done. Why? So that you through his poverty might become rich in forgiveness, faith, eternal life. He was afflicted, with our sins, miserable and riding to terrible suffering. Why? Because he couldn't stand the thought of heaven without you. It's amazing that there were shouts on that day we call Palm Sunday. Here was a lowly guy, on a borrowed

animal, with a few fishermen from the backwoods leading the cheers. Yet the people shouted. And if they hadn't shouted, God would have made the stones cry out. Kind of wish the people hadn't shouted. Would have been cool to hear talking stones.

But let's get back to that animal. A donkey. Ok, this isn't some stately animal, twenty hands high like a horse. This is a lowly pack animal, a beast of burden. Jesus probably rode just inches off the ground, maybe had to bend his knees to keep his sandals from dragging along, because he wasn't even riding an adult donkey, he was actually riding the colt, the younger donkey, one that had never been ridden on before. The donkey was more like a minivan than a Cadillac Escalade. The donkey was the average animal, hardly fit for a king. Unless, you look deeper and really study your Bible, ok? The people of Zion and Jerusalem didn't have many horses, if any. In fact, God prohibited them from having horses for fear they would trust in their animals and not in the LORD. So people had donkeys. Even the kings. When King David wanted to show who the next king was, he put his son Solomon on a donkey. Other times, men rode donkeys to indicate royal status.

There's a significance and symbolism here. The donkey was an animal of peace, not an animal of war. Horses were good for war, tall and fast and... Donkeys were good for peace, slowly carrying your grain home from the field, making your way to the market to sell your olives. That war/peace contrast stands out in these two verses. The word for shout was often a war cry. The word victorious was often used for being saved in battle. But then you hear about the peaceful donkey, then verse ten is even more peaceful.

Look at verse ten again. There's no chariots. Those were like the tanks of the day. There's no war horses. Don't need them. There's no bow and arrows used for battle. They are all broken, shattered, taken away. Here there is no violence, no anger, no power, no wrath, no weapons of war, only righteousness, peace, salvation and every good thing.

Maybe it's better if we bring this picture of disarmament into the present day. Let me paint a scenario and you tell me how you feel. Two students attend different high schools. One says, "I feel safe at high school. I see two police cars in the parking lot every day when I arrive. We walk through a metal detector every day upon entering school. There are security guards constantly patrolling the hallways." The other student hears this and gets a puzzled look. "Why are there police cars? A metal detector? Security guards? I can't imagine the need for that at my high school." Wouldn't you agree the first scenario sounds more like prison than high school? Which makes you feel more safe, when the police cars and metal detectors are there, or when there is no need for them?

Real peace doesn't come from daily fighting the battles and constantly seeing weapons all over the place, real peace comes from knowing that you have won and the other side is incapable of fighting anymore. Peace is only achieved when victory is complete. Our King, Jesus, won the victory. He defeated death on the cross. He went to hell itself to tell the devil once and for all, "You are the loser!" Jesus defeated even death when he rose from the dead. The battle is over. The victory is won. Jesus is the one and only who can proclaim peace, real peace, lasting peace. Peace is more than a fleeting feeling. Jesus' peace is an eternal status, the continual assurance, "Everything is ok between me and God. I'm going to be in heaven soon and Jesus will take care of me right now until I get there." Our king doesn't come with a sword to spread his reign by bloodshed. Our king comes humble to spread his reign with his love.

That makes me wanna shout. Kick my heels up and shout. Throw my hands up and shout! I have peace! God told me so! I have peace! God is never going to take that away. This peace isn't just for me to kick up my heels and throw my hands in the air. This peace is for everyone. Peace to the nations. Maybe you've heard someone say the word, "Goy." It's the word some Jewish people still use to talk about everyone who is not a Jew. That the goy would hear peace. That was crazy! That the king would bring his own peace to the goy, just the same as the Jews, that was unheard of! But, to the goy, like you and me, Jesus brought peace. To the sinful, wicked, goy, he proclaims on earth peace, to those on whom his favor rests.

This peace, this rule, it extends from sea to sea. We still say that. From sea to shining sea. But we just mean our country. This is from one sea on one extreme to the other sea on the other extreme. It extends to the end of the earth. As far as the eye can see.

And here's the really cool part to make you wanna shout. We get to shout this peace to every person. You could walk up to the first person you see at the gas station on the way home and say, "Peace! Jesus loves you!" And be absolutely certain of that. Now, I realize that's probably not the best approach to share the peace you have. And if you shout, you will probably turn that person away from you, not toward you. But what friend just had surgery and needs some peace? Can you proclaim the peace you have? Easter is only one week away. It might be the best week of all to do to proclaim peace to a friend. Which coworker always seems grumpy and in need of some peace? Can the peace that passes all understanding so fill your heart that you let that peace spill over? There might not be a better opportunity. Maybe you won't be worrying about what people think. Maybe you'll pretend like you have a tv in front of you not a hymnal and you will shout! Maybe you'll be like the people on Palm Sunday, maybe you won't be afraid to shout, "Hosanna! Loud Hosanna!" Amen.