

March 28 & 29, 2026 – Palm Sunday

Zechariah 9:9-10

Dear friends in Christ Jesus:

The Israelites' heads must have hung low much of the time. They must have felt defeated. They had returned from exile in Babylon, but the temple was still in ruins. They were a small remnant of what they once were, and they struggled with their identity. But now the prophet told them, **“Look up! Here comes your King!”**

Fast-forward five centuries. The Jews' heads must have hung low much of the time. They must have felt defeated. Sure, the temple was rebuilt, and Herod had even done some impressive renovations. But they still didn't have real freedom. They were subject to the Romans, who told them what to do and how to do it. They longed for the glory that was once Israel's. But then someone shouted, **“Look up! Here comes your King!”**

Fast-forward two millennia. Our heads hang low at times too. We often feel defeated. Sure, we have freedom; we're not subject to another country's king. But we are subject to sin and its sad effects. We long for the days of glory. But today we hear, **“Look up! Here comes your King!”**

We look up to see our hero, our conquering King. We look up to see him on the back of a donkey. We look up to see him on a cross. We look up to see him coming on the clouds.

Today as we celebrate Palm Sunday, we look up to another prophecy from the Holy Week Prophet. Our text is from Zechariah 9:9-10. **Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! Look! Your King is coming to you. He is righteous and brings salvation. He is humble and is riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. The battle bow will be taken away, and he will proclaim peace to the nations. His kingdom will extend from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth.**

“Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! No . . . it's Superman!” And with that, everyone looked up to see their hero coming to the rescue. The Jews of Jerusalem were excited that Jesus had come to their city. They didn't need to hang their heads anymore. They could look up and see their hero, but he wasn't up in the sky. They needed to look up only as far as the back of a donkey. How hopeful the Jews must have been: their king had finally arrived to wage war on Rome. Their superhero would conquer the world: **His kingdom will extend from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth.**

They had already seen him perform amazing miracles. He would be able to raise fallen troops back to life, end the need for supply lines as he multiplied loaves and fish, and destroy the enemy once for all. “Hosanna!” they cried, which means “Save now!” Their hero was at hand. But look how he arrives: on a donkey. Can you picture Superman rattling to the rescue behind the wheel of a rusting bucket of bolts? There was no display of superhuman strength, no lasers shooting from his eyes. He didn't drive a golden chariot pulled by white stallions. He was coming gently, peacefully, humbly. **“Look! Your King is coming to you, . . . He is humble and is riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** Their hero rides a donkey.

And then how strange it must have seemed to those who still followed him on Friday of that week. The hero they were encouraged to look up to was no longer riding anything, not even a donkey. How strange to look up and see him on a cross, being tortured to death. The people were expecting a different kind of king, a monarch who would put Israel's enemies under their feet, a Messiah who would wage a war to end all wars. They were looking for their Superman who would destroy Rome and bring them national peace. But now they looked up to see him on a cross. Why? Why did he who once walked through an angry mob allow himself to be arrested? Why did he, who raised the dead, allow himself to die? They must have wanted to hang their heads again.

Do you often look up to Jesus and wonder: Why does the omnipotent God allow my body to break down? Why does he allow my relationships to fall apart? Why does he let me struggle with my finances and worry so much? Why doesn't he save me from all the suffering and pain? Why doesn't my Superman Savior save me from my troubles? Because he's not that kind of king. He didn't come to wage war on poverty or disease or unhappiness. He didn't come to take away problems or pain or to make this life easy.

When you get disappointed in what Jesus *doesn't* do for you, are you tempted to reject him as the inhabitants of Jerusalem did? Do you feel that if he won't be the kind of Savior you want right now, then you have no need for him, at least not right at this moment? You can always turn to him later, when you think he'll give you what you think you need. If you want to tell Jesus to be the kind of king you think he should be and abandon him

until he gives you what you want, would you be surprised if *he* abandons *you* and leaves you without a hero? Should he make every effort to rescue people who aren't interested in his kind of salvation? Maybe not. But you know what kind of king he is: **“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and brings salvation.”**

Look up to see your Hero, who is righteous, who never sinned, who always does what is right. Look up to see your King, who is victorious, who brings you salvation from your soul's enemies. Look up to see your King, who arrived in a glorious Palm Sunday parade, only to die on a cross. Look up to see him at his lowest. Look up to see him waging war against Satan, against death, against hell. Look up to see him fighting the ultimate battle for your freedom.

Don't hang your head in shame. Look up! He *did* proclaim peace. He *did* win peace between you and God by defeating the old evil foe. He stayed faithful for every time you forsook him, for every time you went AWOL on God. His righteous record is now credited to you, making you perfect in God's sight. He is the humble, gentle, obedient hero you need.

So, if King Jesus proclaimed peace to the nations, why doesn't the world look more peaceful? Why do we still have so much strife? Why do we still hear of wars, of crashed planes, of traitors, of murdered families? Why are our lives still in turmoil because of broken relationships, broken families, broken promises? Because he's *still* not that kind of king. We need to understand what Zechariah meant when he prophesied, **“I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. The battle bow will be taken away, and he will proclaim peace to the nations. His kingdom will extend from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth.”**

On a wall outside the headquarters of the United Nations, words from Isaiah 2:4 describe a world at peace. Yet since that first Palm Sunday, there have been wars and rumors of wars. In 1949, the US Air Force unveiled its newest bomber, the Convair B-36. It had four bomb compartments capable of carrying 86,000 pounds of bombs (ten times more than the World War II B-17 Flying Fortress). It was given a surprising nickname for an aircraft carrying so much destructive power; it was called the Peacemaker. Every enemy knew that it was better to make peace, rather than war, with a nation that flew such a plane.

Such weapons are needed because there will always be wars and rumors of war. Jesus said that would be true until he returns. So the promise of **“peace to the nations . . . from the River to the ends of the earth”** must mean something different.

Jesus is the real Peacemaker. His atoning death for us established peace in our relationship with God. It includes deliverance from guilt and shame, from the fear of death and hell. And one day, we *will* have peace from all our problems, from all wars and conflicts, from all suffering and pain, from all frustration and heartache. A day is coming when he will end wars of every size and type, when he will save us from all the effects of sin and give us perfect, eternal peace. Just not yet.

So we look up to the skies and eagerly await the day when our King will return, no longer humble and gentle but coming in power, no longer riding a donkey but riding on the clouds. We look up with confident expectation that he is coming to bring us perfect, permanent peace.

Look up to see your King on a donkey, riding into Jerusalem to be our conquering hero. Look up to see your King on a cross, paying with his blood for our peace with God. Look up to see your King coming on the clouds, when he will put an end to all conflict. In the meantime, shout his praises: **Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! Look! Your King is coming to you. Amen.**