

Zechariah 9:9-10
Palm Sunday A

Rev. Jonathan E. Scharf
4/17/2011

Crown Him with Many Crowns
He is the King of Joy
He is the King of Peace

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne;
Hark how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake my soul and sing, of him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless king through all eternity!

That's the stuff, huh? How cool is that – to join in a song like that. Crown him with many crowns! Absolutely. It's fun to be a part of that kind of excitement, isn't it? ...whatever it is – where you act differently than you normally would because everyone around you is so excited, ...whether it's at the game that has been built up for weeks and finally, your team is winning and the fight song is playing, ...or at a political rally and the excitement of victory is in the air, ...or right here, right now – praising our God for how truly great he is. It's fun to be a part of that, right?

Now, imagine being a part of that scene in Jerusalem. There was a buzz in the air that weekend like never before as Jerusalem was filled past capacity for the Passover. At times like this, as many as 2 or 3 million people would be there. And this year, the excitement level was off the charts. Rumors were flying about this Jesus guy. They had heard of his powerful teachings. They knew he was a prophet. They had heard about the miracles. And you can just imagine the cleansed lepers and the seeing blind and the speaking mutes being the celebrities telling their stories of what Jesus had done – or the 5000 that had tasted that miracle bread and fish, and the more people they told, the more the excitement grew. And then news of this Lazarus thing we read about last week – raised from the dead – after 4 days in the grave. This was no mistake. He wasn't just unconscious – he had already started to rot...until Jesus walked up to his grave and said, "Lazarus, come out!" And Lazarus lived in Bethany, just a couple miles outside Jerusalem. You could go and talk to him! Maybe this Jesus is more than just a rabbi. Could he be?

We hear of the people looking all over Jerusalem for Jesus, wondering if he'd be at the Passover. Do you think he may be the one we've been waiting for? Could he be...the Messiah? The one come to save us, the one promised, the one that will deliver Jerusalem from all her enemies? Everyone wanted to see him.

Then the word got out. Jesus had arrived in Bethany where Lazarus lived, and there was a dinner there last night in Jesus' honor. Both Jesus and Lazarus in the same place! It was too much to miss. It makes sense that the crowds were filling the roads to come see him and crown him as the King that brought so much joy and excitement. He was the one who could make their lives better – look at all the people he healed. He could take care of their needs – look at all the people he fed. He could give them their freedom – they knew the promises about no earthly governments able to stand up against him. He could give them their best life now, right? Crown him the king of Joy!

But wait a second. Look at the scene again. Yes, our king is coming, but look at this scene. He's on a donkey. It wasn't a long trip. Jesus could have walked. If he wanted to impress the people and gain a military, or even a mob following, he could have done much better than a donkey. But Jesus was making a statement. He wanted them that day, just like he wants us today, to see – he is about more than just today. In fact, today is just a drop in the bucket. He's about eternity. So Jesus perfectly fulfills the 500-year old promise of his entry into Jerusalem. Look at our text. Zechariah writes: **“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”**

That was 500 years before the fact. The king we crown on Palm Sunday has had those crowns coming for a long time – and on Palm Sunday he proved that he deserves them. He is the King of Joy – but not for the reasons that seemed so obvious. You see, if we're just looking for a

healer/provider/protector, if we're just looking for our best life now – we're missing who was promised – the one **“Righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey.”**

The people Zechariah wrote to needed to hear it because they had lost their joy getting too busy with the stuff in front of them that they put their religious life on the back burner. We need to hear it too, because, just looking for joy now is a problem. You see, then, when we realize that this life of sin here doesn't always feel the best, suddenly Jesus doesn't look like the king we were looking for. And, like those Jews in Jerusalem – the cries of “Hosanna!” the cries that were literally calling him their Savior, their Messiah – suddenly change to “Crucify” – because he didn't accomplish what we wanted.

No, Jesus came for something much better than that. His purpose was to accomplish what we need. And we needed the One promised, not the one our sinful minds had invented. So he rode on the donkey – because that is what was promised.

Look at what he came to do. Verse 10 says: ¹⁰ **I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses 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 the ends of the earth.**

You see, he is the king of joy because he is the king of peace. His rule will cover all the earth. And it's much better than some physical rule. It's a rule in our hearts, our souls, for eternity. Notice, the Messiah would not come to conquer on a chariot – but riding a donkey; not with war horses, but a colt, the foal of a donkey. The wood of the battle bow is snapped, because the real battle required the wood of the cross. And he proclaimed peace by being the recipient of those murderous shouts, “Crucify him!” His rule extends from sea to sea because he submitted to some local governor's verdict as Pilate handed him over to be crucified.

And I know, sometimes we get messed up and forget about that. We get caught up with the crowd, either in the church expecting God to fulfill our wish lists like we know better what amount of gifts we should have than he does – or we get caught up with the crowd of this world and crown other things as kings in our lives.

Think about that. Who or what wear the crowns in your life?

When it comes to your being taken care of – have you crowned your job and so feel that if something happened there, you wouldn't be able to make it? Or the bank balance, and so your financial decisions are less about leaning on God and more about making sure your bottom line is secure?

When it comes to your physical security? Does the crown rest on your government, where you feel you need to get stressed about every military engagement we're involved in, or in your home security system or in your sidearm? Or do you truly see those things as gifts God has given you to fulfill HIS job of protecting you?

Or when it comes to your relationships – have you crowned your sense of justice and morality to determine how to act in each of your relationships, and we look to our ability to fight more loudly or be more “right” in the argument instead of crowning the king of love who tells us to imitate his sacrificing, selfless, humbling love?

I read a book last week where the author challenged the reader to name one place or thing in his life where he was truly living on faith and not on some security that he had built. Take a moment and think about that. Now, certainly, for our salvation, – we can only crown our Savior who suffered, died and rose again for our sins – it could never be about what we do – we know that. It can only be Christ and we crown our King of Salvation for that – but what about all the earthly needs – who have we crowned there? In other words, are we out on a limb anywhere – where God has to keep his promises or we're in serious trouble? This writer's point was that too often, we spend such time and effort building up our own securities and actually trust in them, all the while talking about faith, so long as we don't actually have to practice it. Where is the crown there?

Now think about this: For every crown that we've placed elsewhere, Jesus should be the conquering king that destroys us. But no. God's Word promised and Jesus fulfilled. He is the one who comes – **righteous** and having salvation. He lived the perfection we needed on our record and he died the punishment that brought us salvation.

He is the one who comes **gentle**, and riding on a donkey – humbling himself to our needs and fulfilling perfectly the promises of our Savior.

He is the one who came to extend his rule from sea to sea...to the ends of the earth. So let's follow him as he establishes his rule. Let's follow him from Bethany to Jerusalem, because he wasn't on the way to a glorious throne there. He was on his way to a hill called Golgotha. He doesn't lead us to a battlefield and tell us to fight for peace. He leads us to the cross and shows us that he will die for it. He doesn't ask you to swing a sword to help him; he tells you to wave a palm branch to thank him. Follow Jesus to the cross, and you will find peace, because there you see what kind of a king he is.

He doesn't ask you to burn yourself out taking care of yourself, just to lean on him. And we can, because of what he came to Jerusalem to do.

Crown him the Lord of Love, behold his hands and side,
Rich wounds yet visible above in beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his wondering eye at mysteries so bright.

This is a scene of celebration the angels get excited about – It's good to be here. Don't miss your opportunities to come back this Holy Week and crown him king as we review what he's done for us on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and the victory he won on Easter. Crown him!

Amen.