See your King!

1. See how he comes
2. See how he conquers

Are you ready for the big wedding on May 18th? Prince Harry will marry Meghan Markle at Windsor Castle, England. The service will be conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Famous people and dignitaries will be on hand. After the wedding, they will take a carriage ride to the first reception at St. George's Hall, then later reception hosted by Prince of Wales. No expense will be spared for the wedding. Millions will watch all this on TV. And by the way, all of this is for a mere prince. He is not even a king.

Jesus is a king. In fact, he is THE King. But on a Sunday 2,000 years ago he did not receive the same royal treatment. No honor guard of soldiers for him. Just Galilee’s finest fishermen. No specially-made carriage. Just a smelly, borrowed donkey. He did have his fans. Pilgrims in town for the Passover cut palm branches, spread their cloaks on the road before him and serenaded him with hosannas. But not long after the procession came the reception - a little party at a place called Golgotha put on by some Roman soldiers. Zechariah, writing 500 years before the birth of our Savior, points to this humble, donkey-riding man and says: SEE YOUR KING! It is our privilege today to do as writer to Hebrews says, to fix our eyes on Jesus, to see our totally unique King. On the basis of God’s Word we will see how he comes and we will see how he conquers.

Zechariah predicted that the Messiah would come gentle and riding on a donkey. That is about as non-threatening an entrance as one can imagine. It is certainly not the entrance we deserve. We deserve for him to come in anger. We deserve for him to come with judgment. We deserve for him to come with his angelic army, guns blazing and destruction on his mind.

Just think about our world. It is full of violence, hatred and unbelief. Millions starve while tribal warlords carve out their little piece of territory. Terrorists and suicide bombers murder woman and children in the name of religion. Billions turn a deaf ear to the Word of God and reject Jesus Christ as their Savior.

What about our own nation? We like to call it the land of the free and the home of the brave. But real freedom - the freedom that comes through faith in Jesus Christ, seems to be escaping us for the most part. The Psalmist wrote: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Proverbs tells us: Righteousness exalts a nation. I would have to say that, according to those standards, 21st century America does not seem very blessed or exalted to me. We have become a nation of money-grabbing materialism and divorce on demand. We murder our unborn babies by the thousands and call perversion as an alternate lifestyle. As a nation we have pulled our nose out of the Bible and stuck it in the latest cell phone.

And what about us? Are we really any better? Do we talk differently than our unbelieving neighbors, or do the same foul words and dirty jokes come out of our mouths? Do we willingly carry the cross of self-denial our Savior’s placed on us, or do we whine and complain every time we face trial and adversity? Do we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness or are we more interested in what we eat and what we wear than in his Word? Do we bring him generous, firstfruit offerings trusting that he will care for our needs, or do we give him our leftovers once after we have paid for our cable TV? My
friends, we do not deserve a gentle Jesus. We deserve a fire and brimstone Jesus. We do not deserve Jesus on a donkey. We deserve Jesus on a warhorse. We do not deserve Jesus on a cross praying: **Father, forgive them.** We deserve Jesus on a judge’s seat shouting: **Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.**

That is exactly what we sinners deserve. But Zechariah assures us today that it is not what we get. He says: **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.** We have every reason to rejoice and shout. Our King comes not in anger, but with gentleness. He comes not with judgment but with salvation. He comes not as the just and righteous God, ready to condemn us. He comes as a humble man, riding on a donkey, ready to take our place on the cross. This is the King who was righteous for us, the King who fulfilled the whole law, the King who loved God and neighbor perfectly, the King who lived a sin-free life in thought, word and deed.

And yet this righteous King suffered as the worst of sinners, for God placed all our sins on him. Paul describes his humility: **Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!** His boundless love for us took him from the highest heights to the lowest depths, from the glories of heaven to the unimaginable loneliness of hell. True God became true man and suffered the most shameful death of all, the cursed of the cross, damned for our sins.

Because of his perfect life and his innocent death Zechariah tells us to rejoice. Because of him we are forgiven. Because of him a place is reserved for us in the mansions of heaven. This is the King who came as the little babe of Bethlehem. This is the King who came on Palm Sunday to suffer and die for our sins. This is the King who is coming again one day, not in humility, but in great power and glory to judge the living and the dead. This is the King who still comes to us through Word and Sacrament. This is the King who is conquered our hearts.

Think of the world’s great kingdoms and how they conquered their enemies. The Assyrians used brutality. Alexander the Great used superior tactics. The Romans used the overwhelming numbers of the legions. Nazi Germany used the blitzkrieg. All of them used the sword. All of them conquered by force.

Jesus does not. He conquers not with sword or violence, but by his love. He rules a kingdom, a kingdom without borders, a kingdom that stretches across time and space, language and nationality, a kingdom of faith that exists in the heart of every believer. Jesus described his kingdom this way: **The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, Here it is, or There it is, because the kingdom of God is within you.**

Zechariah speaks of it this way: **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.** Chariots? Gone! Warhorses? No more! Battle bows? Broken! Again, Jesus’ kingdom is not about war. It is about peace - peace between God and man. Luther
described the sight of Jesus on Palm Sunday: **Here there is no violence, no armor, no power, no anger, no wrath. Here there is only kindness, justice, salvation, mercy and every good thing.** No wonder Zechariah tells us to rejoice.

My friends, how do we serve such a King? How do we serve a King who loves us and loves all, a King whom humbled himself and died on a cross for us? Paul gives us an excellent answer: **Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.** It starts with attitude, a willingness to get down off our high horse and ride the donkey with Jesus. Humility. Selflessness. Concern for others. The knowledge that **It is not all about me.**

That attitude translates into actions. It can be about simple things. Letting someone else go ahead of you in the checkout line or holding the door for the elderly lady as she come out of the store. But it can also be about more serious matters. Giving up some of the pleasures of life so we can bring generous offerings for gospel ministry or give our children a Christ-centered education. Standing up for Jesus and his Word and then humbly facing the embarrassment and ridicule that can come as a result. Sitting in a hot church on a summer Sunday, suffering through a little discomfort, so that we can receive the profound comfort of the absolution and the Supper. It is all about thankfully humbling selves, carrying our crosses, riding our donkeys, because Jesus humbly rode that donkey all the way to the cross for us.

My friends, see your King! He came in humility. He conquered with his love. He rules in our hearts by faith and gives us all the benefits of citizenship in his kingdom: forgiveness, life and salvation. May God keep our eyes fixed on him, our hearts humble like his, our mouths filled with his praise and our hands ready to serve him and others in love. Yes, sons and daughters of Zion, rejoice! See your King! And know that he came for you! Amen.

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