

Zechariah 9:9-10

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal (f-oh-l) of a donkey. 10 He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth (NRSV).

It seems strange, actually it's a bit eerie to be quarantined on Palm Sunday. For today's sermon I decided to do something that I have never done before. I decided to preach the Palm Sunday message on OT Scripture instead of one of the Gospels. The triumphant entry into Jerusalem is found in all four of the Gospels.

We have been following Matthew's record of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem including the passion predictions along with the travel. We saw that Jesus and the disciples were outside of the country, where they have successfully avoided the plot to kill Jesus, when he tells the disciples that he has to go to Jerusalem. When Jesus gives the first passion prediction the disciples struggle with it. Jesus gives the second passion prediction when they arrive back to Galilee, they are back in the country, in the northern region. Jesus reveals the third passion prediction when they get to Judea, which is the same region as Jerusalem. Matthew shows the forward movement towards Jerusalem but Matthew also demonstrates the significance of the reason for going. Jesus will be betrayed, he will suffer, be mocked, flogged, killed, and raised.

In Matthew chapter 20 they are leaving Jericho which is only 15 miles from Jerusalem. In chapter 21 they are at Bethphage. This puts them within 4½ miles of Jerusalem. The next step is to get to Jerusalem. However, before we go there I want to make a significant point. Jesus could have avoided all of this by simply staying outside of the danger zone. Any normal human being would have done so. But Jesus goes into the face of danger because Jesus has a very significant purpose - the salvation of humanity. Jesus goes because of his divine nature. I've heard people say that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice because he was free of sin. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice because of who he is. Only the Son of God has enough value for the redemption of humanity.

Then Matthew shows us that Jesus is at the Mount of Olives. This is a mountain ridge named for its olive groves. Bethphage is a small village on the ridge. It is from here that Jesus sends out two of his disciples to get a donkey for him to ride into Jerusalem. The disciples fetch a donkey and put their cloaks on it and Jesus sits on it. The type of animal signifies the nature of the king. It is common for the Bible to reveal that divine values are the opposite of human values and expectations. Riding in on a donkey places emphasis on humility and gentleness which is in direct contrast to riding in on a horse like a warrior king would do.

Jesus travels the short distance to Jerusalem where a large crowd of people make a big deal out of it. They spread their cloaks (outer garments) on the road to make a clean path for Jesus. It's like they roll out a red carpet treatment for Jesus. We are used to seeing the crowds follow Jesus. This time we see crowds of people going out ahead of him celebrating. It is a great celebration. The whole city is abuzz as people proclaim this is the prophet Jesus. The whole city is shaken by the arrival of Jesus. The excitement is so great that it scares the religious leaders. They are afraid that Rome will put down any such activity.

Matthew tells us that this took place to fulfill prophecy. Matthew quotes Zechariah 9:9 your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious, humble, and riding on a donkey. Matthew

interpreted the Scripture of Zachariah to testify that the prophecy of Zachariah matches Jesus. It is Matthew's testimony that Jesus is the Messiah that was prophesied by Zachariah. While each Gospel gives different details, all four of the Gospels portray Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. All four Gospels testify that Jesus is the Christ, not only is Jesus the Christ, the name Jesus and the title Christ are cemented together as one throughout history. No one else is known as the Christ and no one else is known to be the Son of God.

Imagine you are one of the disciples, You are with Jesus and you are going with him to Jerusalem. You know the extreme danger that lies ahead but you go with him anyway. You are confident in his leadership. He has teaching like no other. You are a witness to the miracles. You see these miracles as evidence of his divine nature. Everything is exciting, new, and totally different. You are at the very center of what is happening in the world. Then - BOOM - everything crashes and suddenly you are shocked and confused. You can't wrap your head around this. The disciples have to ask "What on earth has happened here?" Fundamental to Matthew's understanding of everything that has happened is that Jesus is the one that was talked about by the prophets. Matthew testifies that what happened to Jesus is what the scriptures said would happen. Ezekiel promised a future Davidic king to rule and unite Israel and Judah. Jeremiah promised the same. The people ask Who is this!? The question is very important. This is the prophet, the one promised, the Son of David. Bet the problem is that they wanted a warrior king to free them from Roman oppression. Jesus came into Jerusalem riding a donkey because God gave them the King of Peace.