

INI - SDG

Palm Sunday

6th Sunday in Lent

April 17, 2011

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

Text: Zechariah 9:9-10 ***Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.'***

Theme: THE KING THAT RODE ON A DONKEY'S COLT

- A humble King
- A powerful King

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus, fellow subjects of the King of kings!

Only 12 more days! Have you cleared your schedule for that day so you can watch the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton? Can you hardly handle the wait? Watching many of our news stations, you would think this royal wedding is a monumental event in American history. Yet their marriage does not affect our nation in any way. The monarchy in Great Britain is largely for show. Queen Elizabeth and her family really have little say in policy making or national defense. Yet this royal wedding seems to have captured the imagination of many Americans. I suppose hearing that a prince is going to get married makes many girls think of the fairytales they used to hear as children. Stories of Prince Charming coming to rescue the damsel in distress and make her his bride, a princess.

But of all those Prince Charming stories you've ever heard of, what have you imagined Prince Charming to be riding on? Isn't his trusty steed always a white stallion? And why is that? Isn't it because Prince Charming's strength and power is reflected his mode of transportation? Speaking in today's terms, we wouldn't expect Prince William and his new bride to ride around in a rusted out 1985 Ford Escort. That would be beneath royalty to ride in such a contraption! Rather we expect them to ride around in some of the finest transportation available - like a Rolls Royce, Aston Martin, or Mercedes Bends.

We have come to expect powerful people to demonstrate their power in their choice of transportation. Isn't that one of the things that is so striking about the Palm Sunday account? The prophet Zechariah writes of a King who's dominion or rule would be ***"from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth."*** There has never been a king that ruled an empire which covered the ends of the earth, except for the King of whom Zechariah writes. Yet how does this powerful King get around? We would expect to find Him on only the finest chariot, pulled by the finest breed of horse in His day. But Zechariah writes of this King that He comes ***"riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."*** That is like Prince William and Kate pulling up to their wedding in a 1971 Ford Pinto! Sure it will get you where you need go, but it is not

very regal at all.

Today we mark the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, some 500 years later, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem the Sunday before His death. I think most of us are very familiar with the Palm Sunday account. We colored pictures of it when we were in Sunday School, we have the opportunity to be reminded of it each year, but have you ever stopped to ask yourself WHY Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey? When Jesus sent His disciples into the village of Bethphage to bring get a donkey and a colt for Him to ride on, was He just looking to show that He was the one Zechariah was writing about, or was there something more at work here? We want to answer that question this morning as we examine "The King who rode on a donkey's colt." May the LORD God bless us and be with us as we examine the words of His holy prophet. Amen.

A donkey certainly has it's value and purpose in our world. A donkey is often called a beast of burden, because it was frequently used to haul heavy loads. Donkeys can run, but they are not very fast. You would not want to ride a donkey into battle or run one in a race. Furthermore, donkeys are known to be rather stubborn and difficult to work with. They were something that was reserved for the poor and lowly, who couldn't afford a horse. While they do have their purpose, given the choice between a horse and a donkey, I sure most of us would prefer a horse to ride on. And yet on the Sunday before His death, we hear that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on colt, the foal of a donkey.

Along with the donkey, what we are most familiar with on Palm Sunday is the hosannas that the people shouted to Jesus and how they hailed Him as their king. Much as our children did this morning. But Palm Sunday was not the only time the people of Israel spoke of Jesus as a king. Right after Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000 (Jn 6), there were some who wanted to make Him a king. And why not?! He gave them food that they didn't have to work for! Who could ask for a greater king than that! Yet Jesus was not a bread King come to meet people's physical needs. He would not allow them to make Him King and left that area.

But on Palm Sunday He didn't shy away from people hailing Him as a King (Lk 20), waiving their palm branches, and proclaiming their hosanna's to Him. Many kings were praised as they rode into the capital city of Jerusalem. But I doubt any of them were riding on a donkey's colt. This happened **to demonstrate the kind of King Jesus was and the truth about His kingdom**. He is a humble King riding on a humble donkey's colt.

This is exactly the King that Zechariah prophesied of in our text. ***"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."*** Zion and Jerusalem are the Church. And the Church is to rejoice and shout for joy over their King. Their King that comes to them. Their King that is righteous and brings salvation. But their King that is lowly and humble. That is the reason this King rode on a donkey's colt, because He is humble.

We would expect nothing different from Jesus, would we. When He was born, He was not born into a noble and powerful family, but to a peasant girl from Nazareth. During His life, though He is the powerful Son of God from eternity, He took on a servant's form. On the night before He died He washed His servant's feet. Though He did many miracles, He never used His almighty power for Himself, but to help others. When He did help people, He told them not to

tell anyone what He had done. Jesus did not want fame as a miracle worker, but as the Prophet and Teacher. Though He created the heavens and earth, He had no place to lay His head and call His own at night. The King of kings had no palace and no army, but was followed by the poor, lame, and uneducated. This King then died a servant's death when He was crucified to save His people.

Though King Jesus rode on a humble donkey's colt, we the Church are to rejoice and shout for joy over our humble King. We rejoice that He is humble. We rejoice that He does not come by force and displays of power. This humble King continues to come with humble means. He rides into the hearts of a little baby with the humble water and word of Holy Baptism. He rides into the hearts of His repentant followers, through the humble means of bread and wine. He rides into our hearts through the humble preaching of the Word. He does not just associate with the mighty and powerful, but with the lowly, the downcast, the repentant sinner. This is our humble King who rides on a donkey's colt.

"Only the strong survive." "Might makes right." "The meek inherit...nothing." The people of this world have always despised humility. Humility to the world is a sign of weakness. That is why so many who passed by the cross on Good Friday mocked and scorned Jesus. They saw no strength and power on the cross, only defeat and humiliation. **"He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"** (Mt 27:42-43) The world thinks that a powerful King would do some powerful act like coming down from the cross. The world sees a crucified Jesus and thinks He is weak and defeated.

We should not let the world fool us into thinking that humility is a sign of weakness. Though this King rode on a donkey's colt, He was powerful. Listen to the power Zechariah writes of about King Jesus. **"I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the battle horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth."** This King that looked so humble riding a donkey and so defeated nailed to a cross, was actually defeating great spiritual enemies and establishing peace. By His death on the cross He was removing the enmity that existed between God and us. He was reconciling us unto God. He removed our sin by taking it on the cross and suffering our punishment. His blood bought peace between God and us.

And the rule of King Jesus? From sea to sea. Though the servant Jesus had no place to lay His head, His rule is over all of creation. We heard from Paul in our New Testament lesson (Phil 2:5-11) that after Jesus humbled Himself, God highly exalted Him, giving Him the name above every name and that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow - even those who mocked and blasphemed Him on the cross. Think of how many call on Jesus as their Savior today! Wherever the Gospel is being preached, Jesus is extending His kingdom.

So we see once again, that the Kingdom of Jesus and the kingdoms of this world could not be more different. Jesus told His disciples, **"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."** (Mt 20:25-28)

Greatness in the Kingdom of Jesus is seen in humility and serving. Not putting oneself first, but putting one another first, even as Jesus put us ahead of Himself as He laid down His life to save us.

The greatness of Jesus was not the power He displayed, but the love He showed by coming to earth to serve us. The Son of God didn't HAVE to become man, but He did so that He could die for us. Jesus didn't HAVE to take on a servant's form, but He did to serve as our Substitute before God. He served us by obeying God's Law perfectly for us. Jesus didn't HAVE to die the humiliating death on the cross, but He did to pay for all of our sins and ransom us. The greatness of King Jesus would not have been coming down from the cross, but the greatness of Jesus is that He STAYED on the cross to save us!

In the verses leading up to our New Testament lesson (Phil 2:5-11), Paul writes, ***“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”*** (Phil 2:3-5) As subjects of King Jesus let us not make ourselves greater than our King who rode on a donkey's colt. Let us see how Jesus humbled Himself to save us and likewise humble ourselves in loving service to one another.

What other animal would you have Jesus ride on? He is our humble King riding on a humble donkey's colt. He who bore the burden of our sins did Himself ride on a beast of burden as He came to save us. Therefore let us join the glad throng on Palm Sunday by proclaiming - HOSANNA! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD! PRAISE BE TO KING JESUS! AMEN.