

O DAUGHTER OF ZION, YOUR KING COMES TO SAVE NOW

Hear the Word of God for this *Lord's Day of Palm Branches* through this conflation, which is a literal "blowing together," of the eternal Truth that is proclaimed in three primary biblical texts which have been heard here today:

O Daughter of Zion! Behold, the King of you comes to you, meek, upon (a) colt of a donkey, (of a) female donkey. Rejoice greatly! Fear not!"¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Today, God has, in this place, gathered together for Himself a people whom He wills to declare holy. To do that, He has proclaimed His Word through men's mouths. Through His chosen means of Word and Sacrament ministry, God speaks to you. You have been joined by God into the common confession of the Faith. Through God's working in, with, and under His pure Word, you are even now to be seen as part of the Church Militant. That means that God has joined you together in a war – with powers, and principalities and dominions that have been cast out of the heavenly realms through the death of Christ. He continues to call to you to behold Him, saying through the prophet Zechariah and the Evangelist/ Apostles Matthew and John:

O Daughter of Zion! Behold, the King of you comes to you, meek, upon (a) colt of a donkey, (of a) female donkey. Rejoice greatly! Fear not!"²

To arrive at that blown-together text, the Holy Spirit used Jesus' own scriptural interpretation principles. That is, He gave the gift of Scripture interpreting Scripture and individual word placement in the texts, to show the Divine emphases in the texts. God's Word guided the direction of the texts that the words of each verse might be placed into an order based upon the frequency of their repetition in parallel texts. (This is not the only way they may be arranged).

Therefore, this year, the Spirit has guided us to hear God's Word beginning with an address that is declared by St. John, St. Zechariah, St. Matthew and also used elsewhere by St. Isaiah. The words that begin the invitation to hear the Word, *O Daughter of Zion,*

¹ *Conflation of Zechariah 9:9 (LXX); Matthew 21:5; and John 12:15. Cf. Isaiah 62:11 (LXX)*

² *Ibid.*

tell us hearers of the Word to whom the content of the following text is directed. Who is this Daughter of Zion?

She is, according to the usage of this title in Scripture, none other than all those who by Faith hear and believe God's revealed Word. The Daughter of Zion is comprised of all who are in the earthly yet spiritual kingdom of God. They are those who have been and are being joined together by God. This He did first under His Old Covenant of grace. Then, since the time when Jesus conquered death, God does this by gathering together in His Word all those who remain in this life under God's New Covenant of grace. The Daughter of Zion is you who are now in this place, who through the Faith, are part of the Church Militant. So, all the texts which use "Daughter of Zion" are God speaking to all of you. To what then does He call you?

The answer is given in the next words proclaimed in all three of the texts we have heard today. The Daughter of Zion in this place today is called first to: *Behold!* That means to truly see – with eyes of the Faith. What are you to behold?

Our texts declare the answer together as one: *the King of you comes.* His is more than a one-time coming. This means that He does not just arrive during one single historical event – though He surely did enter into Jerusalem to shouts of "Save now!" long ago. Jesus, multiple eyewitness reports declare, is the King you are to behold. Lest you are tempted to wander from that truth, His earthly and eternal Kingship was declared for all time by the sign over His Head as He hung on the cross.

Even so, King Jesus still comes to His people, the Daughter of Zion. King Jesus comes whenever and wherever His Word is declared in purity. He comes whenever and wherever His Sacraments are administered rightly.

With those truths in mind, we now turn our ears to the words in the verses that are not shared by all the texts. The next words in our conflated verses reinforce the hearers in the Truth of the Word of God. They emphasize to whom, and for whom, the King comes. They say He comes, *to you.* That is to say, "your King comes to you, O Daughter of Zion."

That teaches us hearers of the Word that our King comes to His Church Militant. He comes, not just for anyone, but to us who have been named as His Daughter, His obedient children. They, we, you, are ones whom He thinks of as being joined together as His beloved daughter.

The joined texts now go on to declare how our King is to be seen coming in fulfillment of the Old Covenant prophecy to His Church. Remember, the Church Militant in which Jesus reigns through Word and Sacraments remains at war with spiritual powers while she remains on earth, in this fallen Creation. In what manner was the King to arrive, how was He known to be fulfilling prophecy?

In a word, Matthew and Zechariah agree: meekly. In addition, our two Evangelists, whose words have been read here, and in congregations like this, on this day every year for many years, declare how the meek King was identified. Matthew and John agree that the palm-heralded King was seen *upon (a) colt of a donkey, (of a) female donkey*. In our day, we might say He entered Jerusalem in a "Smart Car," and not the current Israeli President's Volvo stretch limousine or Audi A8.

In addition to that reality, the coming King also, in riding a young, unmeekeed donkey colt, entered in the manner once normally used by the ancient Israelite kings to ride into Jerusalem. (The steed of honor for some Israelite kings was the donkey. They were to be shepherd kings as was their father David). They would ride such humble mounts into the physical place wherein the *Daughter of Zion* was long ago held to be found in her fullness.

So, we have heard that Jesus, in His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem on the *Lord's Day of Palm Branches*, was following in the paths of ancient kings. All the while, He was displaying meekness in the era of His incarnation.

To remember that, we have repeated the helpful tradition of processing into the Lord's House with Scripture, hymn, and Palm branches. Our Holy Week reenactment of the King's triumphal entrance was originally celebrated in Christian day schools, according to a creditable medieval source. A long time ago, a pope of Rome declared that

the palm processional was to be removed from the schoolhouse and added to the Divine Service on the *Lord's Day of Palm Branches*. From that helpful practice, you are asked, what do the day's scriptures declare that the King had then come to do?

He had come to be righteous and have salvation. This means that He entered the once Holy City fully right with our Father in heaven. He rode through the Mighty Gates of Jerusalem bearing our sins. He did so having no taint of sin in Himself, all the while having in Himself the Divine power to save. What was the Daughter of Zion to do at His arrival?

Our texts declare they were to do as we did today as we entered into this place. This morning, we were chosen by the King of kings to be the place in Catalina where He comes with His righteousness to grant His gifts from His blood-bought salvation work. In response to that, God's Church Militant is called to, *Rejoice greatly! Fear not!* Were you fully faithful to those words as you entered here?

Or, were you, are you even now, weighed down by the cares of this world? Do you wish even now that the King you heralded with palm branches would just come on the clouds this instant and deliver you from whatever you fear – financial woes, health issues, someone who is persecuting you, those who are pressing to redefine marriage, governments who are set on determining people's duty to die – or some such thing? Did you enter those doors intent on asking the Father, through Jesus, to save you now from the crosses that continue to come to those who are living in the Church Militant?

If so, repent! Turn from such thinking. God did not even spare His own Son from the Cross. He has, through His Son and the Holy Spirit, promised crosses to those who continue to herald Him in the Faith. He did not avoid His Cross, and He is God.

Because of that reality, He has given you all you need to fully bear the crosses of this life. That is, He gives you daily forgiveness through His Word. He gives you the fruit of His Cross. These are the temporal and eternal benefits that come from partaking of King Jesus' true victorious Body and Blood in the Faith. He hears and continues to

respond through His means of grace to your annual *Hosanna Sunday* refrain of: *accept the prayers we bring, O Source of ev'ry blessing.*³

Reflect back a bit earlier than the last lines of our processional hymn to the beginning of the Lord's Service to us... . While we were yet outside the doors of the building, we called upon the Name of the Lord. We then echoed the cries of the crowds on the first *Hosanna Sunday*. As pastor and people, we repeated the closing words of the second Gospel reading of this day. Literally, we declared responsively words like these:

*Being blessed (is) the One continually coming in (the) Name of (the) Lord.
Save now (we pray) to the Son of David.*⁴

Did you, when you heard and responded to words like those, really think of what they meant – for us – and for King Jesus? (The Divine Service is God's good work for us. The Lord's Service is not given to us that we might have something to do for reasons other than receiving God's gracious gifts). If you thought of things other than what Jesus has done, and still does for us during His service to us, turn from such thinking. Believe that Jesus knows that we all have moments, hours, days – even months and years – of inattentiveness to His “saving now” Holy Word. In His willing to, and doing, the right response to the clamor of crowds, then and now, Jesus saves now.

Today, you in united confession as the Daughter of Zion have spoken forth that which appears to be an ancient Temple liturgy chant. The words out of your mouth, spoken as you prepared to follow Jesus into this hallowed space declared that which the pilgrim throngs of the Old Covenant heard as they approached the place of sacrifice with their gifts. You said, *Save now (we pray) to the Son of David.*⁵

As you responded to the Good News with those words, you echoed the refrain of the priests of the Old Covenant. They would chant them when they had been gathered to receive the faithful and their gifts before the Lord. Did you think of that then?

³ Theodulf of Orleans. “All Glory, Laud, and Honor,” *Lutheran Service Book*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006, 442.

⁴ *Matthew* 21:9, cf. 23:39; *Psalms* 118:25 (MT).

⁵ *Matthew* 21:9, cf. 23:39; *Psalms* 118:25 (MT).

Well you are thinking of it now, thanks be to God! Out of the Word of God, you are now prepared for all that is coming to be proclaimed here this week. The Lord has heard your prayers to “Save now!” He is going to tell you, even as He shows you on these walls, what your priestly cries demand.

In His passion and death, Jesus, the King heralded on Hosanna Sunday, met your demands. He has been greeted by that which by in the first century AD had been an ancient tradition. The waving of palms before a conquering Israelite king finds its roots in the liberation of the Temple during the reign of the Maccabees. (If you are not familiar with Maccabees, pick up a copy of *The Apocrypha* which is printed by our own Concordia Publishing House). Suffice it to say, from the first Hosanna Sunday on the Daughter of Zion recalls each year that which we are to learn: we are all, as one under the Cross “saved now.”

Jesus’ salvation was won once for all. His way to salvation for the Daughter of Zion, for you, approached its zenith as He entered into His Way of Sorrows. There, He was given His glory on a cross. His body was buried in the grave.

He who was once greeted by palms and the chanting of the words of the prophets and Psalm, truly did all that was demanded of Him. He did so for the salvation of the Daughter of Zion. He did all that for you. That means that you are truly free to *Rejoice greatly!* and, *Fear not!* God in Jesus has again declared you holy!

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Lent VI, *Palmarum* (LSB and Historic One-Year Series)

John 12: 12-19; Zechariah 9:9-11; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 21:1-9

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria