

Look Up to See Your King!

Zechariah 9:9-10

March 29, 2026 (Palm Sun.-A)

St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses 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. (Zech. 9:9-10 NIV)

In the name of Jesus, the blessed King who comes in the name of the Lord, dear friends:

“Look! Up in the sky! It’s a bird! It’s a plane! No...it’s Superman!” With that, the people of Metropolis look up to get a glimpse of their hero flying in to save the day.

In Zechariah’s day, people’s heads were hanging low. It was about 520 BC, 17 or so years after the Jews had returned from their captivity in Babylon to their homeland of Jerusalem and Judah. You’d expect them to be happy. But they were sad. Their temple was still in ruins. They were a much smaller group than before, and they were surrounded by enemy tribes and nations who didn’t want them there. How they longed for a hero, a Messiah, to come and rescue them.

Sometimes we find our heads hanging low, when we feel depressed, discouraged and dejected. In our battles against sin and Satan, we often fail and feel like a defeated people. But the Lord has great news for us. He speaks through his prophet Zechariah: **Look Up to See Your King!**

On a spring Sunday in AD 29, the people of Jerusalem got word that Jesus of Nazareth was approaching their city. Many of the people went out to greet him. They lifted up their heads and their eyes to see this man who they hoped would be their conquering Messiah, their King. Knowingly or unknowingly, they did just what Zechariah’s prophecy told them: “Rejoice, Daughter Zion! Shout [for joy], Daughter Jerusalem!” Their King was coming to them, and so they shouted to him, “Hosanna!”, the Hebrew word for “Save!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

Yet, as they lifted up their eyes in expectation, they actually had to look a little lower as Jesus went past. For Jesus was not riding on a proud, white stallion, but on a lowly donkey. Using another superhero picture, can you imagine Batman coming to Gotham City not in his Batmobile but behind the wheel of a rusting bucket of bolts? There was no golden chariot, no team of horses pulling Jesus around town to announce his victorious arrival. Instead, Jesus came “lowly,” in meekness and humility, riding on the foal of a female donkey, included in his humble entourage. What must the people of Jerusalem be thinking when they looked up to see their king...on a donkey?

But do not look down on this lowly king. For Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah with his lowliness. He was, as prophesied, “righteous and victorious,” or sometimes translated “having salvation,” the one to bring salvation and victory through his lowliness. For this reason, look up to see your king. Jesus came to achieve salvation by suffering even greater humility than riding on a donkey. Five days after Jesus rode into Jerusalem, people looked up to see this king... on a cross.

On that Friday there was no shouting of “Hosanna!” or victory palm branches waving. It was obvious that morning that this king wasn’t going to restore Israel to glory, or lead an army to overthrow the hated Roman empire. When his enemies took Jesus, bound and condemned, to the Roman governor Pilate, they charged him with claiming to be the Messiah, a King. Pilate took one look at this beaten-up man in front of him. “You? Are you the King of the Jews?” Pilate asked sneeringly. Jesus

explained that his kingdom was not of this world, but from a different place. But this was not the kind of king the crowds were expecting. Instead of “Hosanna!” they joined Jesus’ enemies in shouting out, “Crucify! Execute Jesus on the cross!” And Pilate gave in and authorized his crucifixion.

Do we get disappointed with our King? Perhaps we wonder, “Why does God let me struggle in life? Why did he allow this war to happen that’s driving up gas prices and other costs—I’m having a hard time making ends meet as it is! Why is he allowing me to struggle with personal relationships? Why does he allow suffering and pain in my life? Can’t the Almighty God help me?”

With the rejection that Jesus faced that Friday—and our own sinful thoughts and attitudes—it wouldn’t be surprising if Jesus just said, “Enough of this humility stuff. I am the Almighty God; how dare you question and reject me! I’m not going to suffer the worst kind of pain for you rotten people”, and then he comes down from the cross and strikes his enemies dead. Thank God Jesus didn’t do that! Look up to the cross to see your King, still righteous, offering up a perfect, sinless sacrifice to pay for the sins of rotten people like you and me. Look up to the cross to see your King, victorious with salvation, for his suffering and death crushed Satan’s power; death and hell would be vanquished too.

Look up to see your King on the cross and marvel at his love for you. Don’t hang your head in shame. Look up! Jesus did win the victory, and he did proclaim peace, peace between us sinners and the holy God, because God credits Jesus’ righteousness to our account, as a result of his full payment of sin. Yes, when Jesus cried on the cross, “It is finished!” (our Lent theme this year), he really meant it. The full payment was made, prophecies are fulfilled, our salvation is complete on the cross.

And as we look up to see our King, we anticipate the day that we will see him on the clouds. Hear the Lord tell us how our King will bring peace: “I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations.” We might wonder how. For 2,000 years since Palm Sunday there’s been nothing but wars and rumors of wars—we’re in a messy war in Iran right now. Shootings and riots, a landing plane crashes into a fire truck causing death—the news of strife and deadly accidents continue.

Jesus has not come to bring that kind of peace. He brings a peace that’s much greater: Peace in our relationship with God, with sins forgiven. Jesus has delivered us from guilt, from shame, from the fear of death and hell. We have this peace right now. And one day soon, we will look up to see our King coming on the clouds, and he will bring the everlasting peace of a new heavens and new earth yet to come.

Jesus’ rule “will extend from sea to sea and from the [Euphrates] River [in the Middle East] to the ends of the earth.” Already now we see that being fulfilled as Jesus’ gospel gets proclaimed everywhere. Sadly, many people do not believe and reject his rule. But one day, all the nations will look up to see the King on his throne. Jesus told the Jewish Council at his trial, “From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64). In Revelation 1:7 it is foretold, “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.” The wicked will perish; believers will reign with Christ forever in heaven.

Look up! See your King, on a donkey coming to save; on a cross, paying the price for peace; and one day on the clouds, in ultimate victory, he’ll bring everlasting peace. Rejoice greatly, Daughter North Freedom! Shout, Rock Springs, Baraboo, Reedsburg, and wherever you might be! For your King is coming for you! Amen.