

Palm Sunday - Palmarum - Second Sunday of the Passion

Hymns: 41, 162, 161, 160

(omit Gloria, responses before & after the Gospel reading, and other ascriptions of praise during Lent.)

The INTROIT

(Psalm 22:1,19,21)

P: Be not Thou far from me, O Lord;

C: O my Strength, haste Thee to help me.

P: Save me from the lion's mouth;

C: and deliver me from the horns of the unicorn.

P: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

C: Why art Thou so far from helping Me?

The COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast sent Thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon Him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility, mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Zechariah 9:9-10

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

The GRADUAL

(from Ps.73 & 22)

P: Thou has held me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory.

C: Truly, God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped; for I was grieved at the ungodly.

P: Why art Thou so far from helping Me:

C: and from the words of My roaring?

P: I am a worm and no man:

C: a reproach of men and despised of the people.

P: Be not Thou far from Me, O Lord;

C: O My Strength, haste Thee to help Me.

P: I will declare Thy name unto My brethren:

C: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.

P: They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born:

C: that He hath done this.

The EPISTLE

Philippians 2:5-11

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Philippians 2:8)

P: Christ has humbled himself, and become obedient unto death:

C: even the death of the cross.

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Matthew 21:1-9

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Zechariah 9:9-10 — “Rejoice Greatly, Thy King Cometh Unto Thee”

INTRODUCTION

I. REJOICE GREATLY, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE

II. HE IS JUST AND HAVING SALVATION

III. HE SHALL SPEAK PEACE TO THE HEATHEN

CONCLUSION

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Zechariah 9:9-10 — “Rejoice Greatly, Thy King Cometh Unto Thee”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The appointed reading of the Old Testament appointed for Palm Sunday is Zechariah 9:9-10:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Today is Palm Sunday. On this day the people of Jerusalem saw fulfilled the promises of God concerning His loving-kindness toward mankind. The people rejoiced. Christians continue to rejoice throughout the world on this day. Why? Why is this day cause for rejoicing? Why do we gather this day and chant and sing the liturgical responses of this day? What does it really mean?

I. REJOICE GREATLY, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE

This day was a day for which the people of God had expectantly awaited for hundreds of years. This day was foretold by the prophet Zechariah as we read in our text for this day.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee:

Your King comes unto you! How many years had the people awaited this day? How many times did the people pray for this day? Could anyone even remember? Since the fall of Jerusalem other kings had ruled over the city and the people. The Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and then the Romans all ruled over the land and people of promise.

But is this really the issue? Is this what Zechariah addresses? Partially it is, but the rule of these foreign governments is really symptomatic of a much bigger issue. For in the beginning there was only one King over Israel and He ruled not by a sword of bronze or iron or steel. He ruled without the threat of violence. He ruled from above these things. For the LORD God Almighty was the one and only King. That is, until the people looked upon the other nations and stopped trusting that the LORD's protection was sufficient. They looked upon the kings of the other nations, the kings of the goyim, the heathen kings, and they saw how they had standing armies and chariots and fortresses. The people became afraid because of what they saw in the

world. They began to cry out and to demand that they should have a king like the other nations.

They received what they demanded. They turned aside from their true King and received kings who raised armies, taking their young sons to serve in the military. Then, to pay for the military and the horses and the chariots and the fortresses and the bows and arrows and swords and spears and the food for the soldiers and the wages of the soldiers, the kings began to demand taxes. Then more taxes. And the kings built more fortresses and chariots and purchased more horses and engaged in more and more wars and demanded more and more taxes. Under Solomon, the third king, the taxes became so oppressive that the people began to speak of rebellion. By the next king the kingdom divided. Now the people who were once united under the gracious rule of the LORD were now divided and fighting against one another and were divided not only regarding secular government, but also regarding religion. Things grew more and more troublesome until the northern kingdom was conquered and deported by the Assyrians and Syrians and finally the southern kingdom was conquered and deported by the Babylonians. From this time forward, the people of Israel and Judah were ruled over by foreigners.

But they were eventually permitted to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. In this way the LORD restored to them that which was most important. He again demonstrated the Kingdom that truly mattered. And some of the people truly did understand. And this is the promise that is foretold by Zechariah. The promise is not that a secular king would come to the people but that their true King would come unto them and restore them before all the world as those through whom the true government of God would be reestablished on earth.

II. HE IS JUST AND HAVING SALVATION

**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation;**

Truly this is cause for rejoicing. Some of the people actually did understand. In Luke 2 we are told about Simeon and Anna, both who by the Holy Spirit rejoiced to see the LORD come to His temple. They celebrated Palm Sunday 33 years early, while the LORD was still carried in the arms of Mary and Joseph. Surely there must have been at least a few on the day that the Lord Jesus came to town riding on the lowly ass, surely there must have been at least a few who understood the true meaning of the ancient liturgical cry, **“Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”**

All of the people chanted the words of this ancient liturgical text, the same words that they had repeated in their worship for centuries, from generation to generation. As the Lord Jesus rode into the city, the people chanted this with excitement and fervor. There were many thousands of people present for this holy feast of the Passover. They all knew that this was the time of the fulfillment of the prophecies. They were able to calculate from the information recorded by Daniel. This was the promised time!

But were the crowds really looking for the King that the prophets foretold would come unto them? Were they really looking for the King who is just and having salvation? Did they even realize that from which they needed to be saved?

Do we? Do Christians today really understand who their King is? Do Christians today really believe that He comes to us as He promises? Do we really believe that the King is here with us now, coming in flesh and blood to rule us as the one who is just and having salvation?

When we look back at the crowds who cheered and chanted the ancient liturgy on that day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of an ass, it is easy for us to see the hypocrisy of the crowds. It is easy for us to see how misdirected they were in their understanding. We see it manifested on Friday when the same crowds cry that they have no king but Caesar, followed by cries of their desire to murder the one whom Pilate called their King.

But do we see our own hypocrisy? Do we see how we cry out **“Hosanna”** without really meaning it? Do we see how we call Jesus Lord but do not really want Him for who He really is? Do we see how we call Jesus Lord but then turn to the secular government and to our own efforts to save us? Do we realize how we reject Jesus as our King by our worrying and fretting and by our compromising and selfishness? Do we confess how we cry out **“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”** but do not really look for Him to come to us with righteousness and salvation in the Sacrament?

The truth is that He tells us this is how He comes to us in righteousness to work salvation for us. Just as surely as He rode into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass He comes to us today in bread and wine. Just as surely as He came to Jerusalem to restore righteousness and to accomplish salvation He comes to us today for the very same purpose and with the very same promise. How can simple bread and wine accomplish this? They don't, no more than the donkey did. No, it is the LORD who accomplishes this. Just as He used the donkey as the vehicle to carry the righteousness and salvation of His body and blood into Jerusalem, so also today He uses bread and wine.

Just as with the people who received Jesus on the back of an ass would have been saved from turning to anyone or anything else if only they had believed, so also we will be saved from trusting in ourselves or anything else other than Jesus if we believe that He truly comes to us in the bread and the wine. This is how He promises to help us. This is how He promises to give to us the life and salvation that we cannot find or provide for ourselves through any other effort or means. Does He ever lie? Does He ever fail to keep His promise? Certainly not. What He says He does. On this we can stand without any doubt.

III. HE SHALL SPEAK PEACE TO THE HEATHEN

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

Our King is unlike any king or ruler of this world. Every ruler of this world makes promises of victory through leading us to take up arms and to fight. Every leader whom we elect promises more powerful armies and weapons and to increase the strength of the police force. Every leader to whom we turn in this world demands that we pay for whatever things are attempted and blames someone else when these attempts fail.

But our righteous King of salvation comes and declares that He will cut off the weapons and do away with our fighting. He declares that He will speak peace to those who reject Him and oppose Him. He declares that His control will be through the power of His Word and not through use of violent force.

Is there any other leader who speaks this way? There surely are those who pretend to be promoters of peace, but do they not attack others continually? Islam, the religion of Muhammad, proclaims that it is the religion of peace, but by what means? It is the religion of the sword. It is the religion of conquering by violence. So also is the religion of the Declaration of Independence, which established the United States as a nation that would always be at war, always facing rebellious uprising and unrest. In the history of the nations, all of the nations, where has there been a seeking of peace by any other way? Even among those who preach passive resistance, men like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., did they not promote intentional breaking of the law as a means to their ends? Is this not actually the promotion of violence, by forcing the police to take action to enforce the laws that were being broken, laws that did not cause the individuals to do wrong but only to suffer wrong done unto them?

But the King who comes to us in righteousness and having salvation speaks peace unto the heathen, that is, the goyim, the nations. He speaks this peace not as coming through one nation conquering another, but through the elimination of that which causes conflict. He comes unto us as the one who is just, that is, the one being Himself the righteousness that is lacking in the world and in us. He does not come to demand justice or righteousness but to fulfill it and provide it. He does not come to tell people how to save themselves but to save them.

How many ways do we try to save ourselves from sin and the effects of sin in the world and in our lives? Can we even list them all? Just to consider a few of them, if we have computer and an Internet connection, we have anti-virus software and fire walls. We have home owner's insurance for our homes. We have auto insurance for our automobiles. We have life insurance and disability insurance for our incomes. He have medical insurance and dental insurance. We put chlorine in our water. We put fluoride in the toothpaste. We take vitamin and mineral supplements. We take medications prescribed by doctors. We have fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems. We have air bags and seat belts in our vehicles. We have weather bureaus to warn us against severe weather. We have locks on the doors of our houses and even alarm systems. We have police and fire departments. The list goes on and on, but are we truly made to be safe by any of these? We attempt to guard ourselves against emotional abuse and addiction and bad habits and many other things as well. How safe are we from these things by what we attempt to do?

In the beginning none of these things were even imagined by mankind. Only after turning from the Word of the LORD did any of these things plague the hearts and minds of people. But our King comes to us even though we have turned away from Him and continually turn away from Him. His is just and having salvation. He speaks peace to the heathen, even when we turn out to be the heathen. He comes to us and calls to us with His words of peace. This peace He has purchased for us. He has taken our sin so that there is nothing remaining to separate us from His love and mercy and peace. He has provided the means of grace through which He makes His salvation continually supplied to us. He pours out His Spirit into our hearts in Baptism so that He continues with us, speaking His peace to our hearts. He has established His Church on earth where He calls us to gather, where He comes to be with us, not only spiritually, but bodily, feeding us the very body and blood by which His Holy Communion is reestablished among us as He pours out to us the forgiveness and righteousness and life that are in His blood.

CONCLUSION

This is what Palm Sunday is. This is the meaning and purpose of every Sunday, every gathering of the true Church of God on earth, gathered by the calling of the Holy Spirit into the name of Jesus to receive these means of grace through which all things are given to us freely.

Our salvation is sure. God's righteousness is restored unto us so that we may eat and drink and work and play and live and die in peace, knowing beyond doubt that dying we live even forevermore. Yes, today we rejoice, for our King comes to us, and He is just and having salvation. We rejoice in the divine liturgy and we give thanks to the LORD for His goodness. Even as He comes to us, so we receive Him and all the blessings of His Holy Communion.

In the Introit we joined with the saints of old saying, **“Be not Thou far from me, O Lord; O my Strength, haste Thee to help me.”** Truly we have been comforted again with the declaration that the LORD is not far from us as we so often imagine. He comes unto us and works salvation for us and speaks peace to us. Through us He speaks His peace to the nations as we gather in His name and partake of His blessed Communion together. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.