



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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March 16, 2008
Palm Sunday
Zechariah 9:9, 10
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Zechariah 9:9, 10
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 24
Second Lesson: Philippians 2:5-11
Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11

Your King Comes to You!

In Christ Jesus, dear Christian friends, and this morning especially you, our Confirmation Class this year:

Did you get up earlier this morning? Did it take a little bit longer to get ready? Not at all, huh? You probably did things a little bit differently. Did you spend most of yesterday cleaning the house to get ready for this afternoon? I imagine some of you did. You do things a little bit differently when you have a special day I suppose.

Think about it with all the political campaigning that is going on. Let's say one of the candidates was to come and speak in Morrison today. Do you think things would be a little bit different around town? Do you think there would be a little more rigmarole as you tried to drive to church this morning? Do you think the Secret Service or different people would have different things blocked off? And if you went to where it was, do you think you might have to pass through a metal detector or something else? There would be a lot of things different if one who would be king or a presidential candidate was speaking to us this morning.

So as we gather together on Palm Sunday, we get the chance to see how our King of kings comes to us. He doesn't come the way you would see a political candidate come. He doesn't come probably even the way that you guys might have taken some extra time to get yourself ready this morning. Our King comes to us in humility, in a way that you wouldn't expect him, but he comes with the greatest thing of all. He comes to us with salvation. That is what Zechariah said would happen hundreds of years before it did and as we heard this morning, that's exactly what did happen on the first Palm Sunday when Jesus entered into Jerusalem. The King comes in humility.

It's kind of fascinating when you listen to that Second Lesson and hear that Jesus is true God from all eternity and yet he didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped. He set aside the full and constant use of his divine nature, his God-ness, and became fully human. As the God-man came to this earth to live in our place and then to die in our place, when you think about that kind of love and that kind of humility—that kind of setting aside your own interest to put the interest of others ahead of your own—it's absolutely amazing. You see the extent of it as our King comes to us. He doesn't come to us in a war chariot. He doesn't come to us displaying his power. He comes to us displaying his love and his humility. He comes on the foal of a donkey. It's just not how you would expect. It's not what you would expect. But that is our God.

Our God acts in ways that we would not expect. Our God acts in a love that goes beyond our understanding as we say Sunday after Sunday after the sermon. His love goes beyond our understanding because we are not used to a kind of love that puts the interest of others ahead of your own. Humility, humbleness—the acknowledgment that you’re not everything at times that you think you are—that’s what it means for us. But for Jesus, he was everything that we think that he is and yet he still set aside that full and constant use of his divine power. He still came on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He still did it, not for any benefit for himself, but for a benefit for us—the taking away of our sins.

When our Savior comes to us in that kind of humility, he also tells us that the love that he shows to us has an affect on us. It is there to teach us humility—a humbleness that comes from the realization that we are sinners; our sins separate us from God; we have nothing to offer up to God; we can’t give anything to him or make bargains with him or manipulate him into doing what we want by saying “God, if you do this for me, I will do this for you.” We have nothing we can offer him. True humility that we see in Christ reminds us that we have nothing. He is everything. We are nothing. We can’t give him something he doesn’t already have. So we learn not to think so much of ourselves.

That’s hard at times, isn’t it? We all like to think about how special we are. It’s probably kind of hard for you guys this morning, huh? You have a flower on the side of your gown. You are wearing a pretty white gown somehow telling us that you must be special, huh? Sometime maybe later you will go open up a whole bunch of gifts, so you must be really important, huh?—a lot more important than everyone else? You aren’t tempted to say that at all to anyone else today, are you? Don’t lie to your pastor (ha ha). That’s the way we are. We are sinners. We need a Savior.

Part of that humility that hopefully you have today is that you remember that you aren’t at the peak of your knowledge of God. If this is the most you ever know about God, if this is the strongest your faith ever is, then we as a church have failed you. Your humility also ought to remind you that there is a lot you can learn about God yet. You can grow in your faith. You can grow to know this love that he showed you in humbling himself more and more. And as you grow, you will have more experiences as you get older and you will be able to see how that love applies to your daily life. There are times the love God has for you will humble you. It will knock you to your knees and just amaze you that God loves you that much. Keep your eyes open for those opportunities to see those things. Keep your ears open so you hear his Word, so the Spirit touches your heart and you continue to grow in your faith. Don’t think you know it all now.

But like I said, there is a temptation to that. There is a temptation for each and every one of us to think we know all there is to know about God and that we don’t have a real need to learn more or to think that we should do things more for God and that God should be happy with what we have done for him already and if he wants more from us, well that’s too bad.

This last week I had an unpleasant reminder of that truth. Last Wednesday we had a presentation of the Stewardship Committee at school and then in the afternoon. The Stewardship Committee gave a presentation on what Stewardship is and then asked all

the children of our congregation, the Wednesday class that meets in the afternoon and the children at our school, to make a poster teaching what Stewardship is all about. It was really a neat presentation. I thought it was very well done. As I was waiting for the Wednesday afternoon class to show up, I happened to walk past a garbage can. The Stewardship Committee gave an envelope that had a place where you could practice the poster, a letter for the parents, and the poster that they are to make that we are going to hang up in church that teaches what they believe Stewardship is. They also gave them a little bank that they could put together and take home. I found in the top of the garbage one of those envelopes with everything in it except the bank. So it kind of seemed to me that someone took the bank because they wanted the bank for themselves, but take the time to “use my gifts and abilities to teach other people what Stewardship means to me? I don’t have time for that” was the message I saw in seeing that lay there on the top of the garbage.

I think that is kind of sad, but it is a reminder of what we are all like, isn’t it? We all think we are too busy. We all think we are too important to help teach about God to others or to live for God or to spend time reflecting on who God is and what he has done for us. I know we are busy. I know we have a lot of things going on. I know you have a lot of things to do all the time. But the love that God has shown for us in Christ, letting it touch our lives and then respond in humility that says “Lord forgive me where I have failed you,” that response and humility that stands in incredible awe of the fact that God loves us and has forgiven us in spite of all the times that, by our words and our thoughts and our actions, we have thrown him into the garbage, that’s the kind of thing we need to make time for.

I’ve talked to you a lot about it over the last couple of years. How important it is that you continue to make time to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He gives us every reason to want to know him better, to want to grow, to want to be closer to him, to want to remain in him, to want to not be ashamed of the gospel, to find in him our refuge and strength. He gives us that desire because our King comes to us not with attacks, not with the demand of him paying tribute to us. Our King comes to us with salvation. That is what Zechariah said would happen. “Your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation.” Your King comes with a salvation that takes away the battle bow, that makes it so peace is proclaimed to the nations and the chariots will be taken away because the greatest war that is going on is not the one between nations. It’s the one that is there by nature between us and God. We want nothing to do with him. We don’t think that he loves us or that he is with us. In fact, we view the message of the gospel as foolishness. “It’s just silliness this idea that someone lived and died in our place”—by nature that is what we are like.

By nature we are not righteous or perfect. We are sinners who deserve condemnation in hell. But God comes to us and he breaks down the things that separate us. He gives us the perfection that God demands. He dies the death that should have been the death that takes the punishment for our sins. He comes to us with this salvation and he breaks down that barrier that is between us and God and he takes away all that war that exists between us and God. He gives us deliverance. He sets us free. He gives us salvation. It doesn’t come because we have done anything or because we have tried hard or because we have loved him with all our heart. We certainly haven’t and in the

future we certainly won't. Our God comes to us with salvation because he loves us even when we are unlovable.

So as you go forward and you serve your God, don't think that is paying for your sins. You know better than that. Don't think that your vow today takes away your sins. You know better than that. Don't think that anything you do makes God love you any more than he already does, but live for him because he has saved you. Live for him and get to know him better because he has loved you when you were unlovable. That is how our King comes to us—with these incredible gifts.

God's Spirit has made them your own through baptism and through the Word. And this Thursday, you will now be able to come to the Lord's Supper where he will strengthen your faith through that life-giving food of the body and the blood in, with and under the bread and wine. Make faithful use of all the means of grace so that his salvation comes to you day after day after day. Your King wants to visit with you! And you know he loves you!!