

March 24, 2028 (Palm Sunday B)

Zechariah 9:9-10

“KING of the Unexpected”

The “gods” people invent / the “gods” people make up – generally make sense, at least in their own minds. Many today think of God as a kindly old grandfather type – pretty accommodating and tolerant of whatever people want to do, after all (they assume) he just wants us to be happy. Others expect that God will judge us based on our deeds – if we’re good enough and follow the rules well enough, he’ll reward us. Even the ancient gods made sense to the ancient mind – if they wanted good crops / lots of kids / success in war – then they’d sacrifice to whatever god they wanted stuff from.

The One True God, on the other hand, is totally NOT what people would expect. What God did in sending **Jesus** to the world . . . was totally unexpected. I don’t think human beings would ever guess, or could even make up – the concept of the **Trinity**. And – that Almighty GOD would take on human flesh to rescue fallen mankind by becoming a sacrifice of atonement HIMSELF?

The Word of God alone reveals these mysteries to us. The prophets saw God’s shocking and unexpected plans ahead of time. The virgin will be with child and give birth to a Son (Isaiah 7:14) – who would be Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6) and a Suffering Servant who would bear God’s wrath over sin, die, provide us with forgiveness, then rise again (Isaiah 53 / Psalm 22 / Psalm 16).

No manmade religion accepts the Triune Nature of God, nor the dual Nature of Christ as both 100% GOD and 100% MAN (as we see so clearly explained in Philippians 2:5-11). Our Lord is, in so many ways, **KING of the unexpected**. This King, and what He would do on Palm Sunday and beyond, was also seen by **Zechariah** the prophet more than 500 years before it happened:

Zechariah 9:9–10 (NIV)

9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. [The great King who is simultaneously Almighty God – would enter Jerusalem as a *humble and lowly* King; the opposite of all earthly kings who show off as much glory, wealth, and power as they possibly can.]

10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses 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.

He did indeed bring PEACE to the world, but not at all the way people expected. Even those who knew the words of the prophets . . . found Jesus was **not at all what they were expecting**. To the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Jesus was the opposite of what they expected, and they flat out rejected Him as their King. But, I think even the disciples and perhaps even John the Baptist kind of expected Him to bring about everything connected with His *SECOND Coming* . . . back there at His *FIRST Coming*. You could certainly get that impression from many of the prophecies / these events appear to happen back-to-back. I don’t think anyone back then would have expected us to still be celebrating Palm Sunday, in a world still ravaged by sin, division, death, disease, and war . . . roughly 2,000 years later, as things get increasingly worse.

If we lived back then, and connected THIS prophecy to what we were witnessing with our own eyes . . . we’d probably be thinking, *“It’s TIME! The glory days of King David and Solomon are about to return – but . . . this time, it’ll be even better! No more hunger or poverty! No more suffering or slavery! God has come to rescue His people, just as He has promised! He will triumph – and so will we! The cruel Roman Empire will be shattered. The enemies of God’s people will be so utterly devastated that there won’t even be a need for weapons of war ever again. Everything is about to take place!”* And – waves of excitement reverberate through your body and soul.

Then . . . *what do you see happen?* Probably NOT what you were expecting! Jesus drove out the money-changers from the temple courts . . . *was this the beginning of a grand rebellion?* Jesus stood up to the religious leaders of Israel and publically shamed them for their hypocrisy . . . *wouldn’t He need them to be on His side?* Jesus patiently taught the crowds about repentance, faith, and the Kingdom of God . . . *wasn’t NOW the time for action?* He celebrates the Passover with His disciples, and – if you had the privilege of being there, you would see HIM washing *their* feet . . . *wasn’t HE this glorious King?* You would see Him give His followers His body and blood as He gave them the bread and wine . . . *what is He doing?* That night He was betrayed and arrested in the Garden . . . *didn’t He see it coming? Couldn’t He have fought and destroyed that little crowd of men with swords and clubs?* He’s beaten and mocked by His enemies . . . *why would He allow this?* He’s put on trial before the High Priest and before Pontius Pilate . . .

*why didn't He defend Himself? He doesn't even bother to answer any of those false accusations about Him! He's nailed to the cross and lifted up to die . . . why doesn't He do something? He cries out in agony – and . . . THEN HE DIES?! **Nothing happened the way it was supposed to!***

Everyone's expectations and hopes were dashed! How could He fail? Could God's Messiah . . . FAIL? Could God's promises not come to fruition? Just imagine the shock, horror, and disbelief of God's people. WHAT NOW? They hid out with crushed, fearful, spirits behind locked doors. Then . . . He **rises** from the dead! *Finally – NOW – everything is going to happen as we expected it to!* No . . . not at all. He shows up here and there over 40 days, then ascends back to heaven, and sends His people off to tell everyone about what He has done and accomplished.

Rome is still there! God's enemies are still persecuting God's people! In fact, it gets even **worse!** The faithful are still poor – but now many of them are thrown in jail and tortured, while others (including the Apostles) are murdered in cold blood. *Nothing was happening the way they expected it to!* Then Jerusalem is destroyed and the Temple is reduced to ruins. Then the church begins to slide away from God and the papacy rises and becomes ever more wicked and corrupt. Then the Church of the East and the West split (1000 AD) because 2 rotten and petty bishops decided to excommunicate each other. Then both sides slide ever deeper into spiritual darkness until the Reformation. Then you didn't just get one more denomination, but a whole bunch of them – and things slid off in all sorts of crazy directions. Then the rise of theological liberalism comes as an offshoot of a new religion inspired by Darwin – and does astounding damage to all different branches of Christianity, leaving the buildings untouched, but the church utterly slaughtered.

And . . . *here we are . . . where **no one expected us to be**, in a world no one but God could have foreseen. Unbelievers today look at us and, perhaps rightly, say: "You Christians can't even get along with yourselves! You Christians still suffer and struggle, and make horrible mistakes like everybody else – your 'faith' doesn't seem to work that well. And you refuse to go along with what is expected now in this modern and 'enlightened' culture. You dinosaurs belong in the past."*

Well, OK, we expect that, but as Christians we just continue to study the Word of God . . . and even there we keep running into things we don't expect! *Why did Jesus say that? Why did He say it that way?*

*What on earth does that mean? How am I supposed to interpret that prophecy? In our Revelation class we keep wondering, what does THAT mean? Worse yet, He continues to pound on us with His LAW and exposes the wretched ugliness of our horrible sins. He won't let us get away with our weaknesses or enjoy our pet sins – He calls us out and calls on us to **repent!***

From there He does something even more shocking and unexpected . . . He forgives us. He tells us all that righteous anger has all been poured out on Jesus, and that we are now at PEACE with God. **What?** He showers us with pure grace and tells us that we (rotten sinners) are spotless, pure, and HOLY in His eyes? The same God who brought us to our knees in sheer terror – takes us by the hand and lifts us up, smiling upon us, and granting us a slice of that pure "Shalom" peace that Zechariah said He would provide (as HE rules all across this world in His global Church / His faithful band of believers) . . . although we still have to wait for the ultimate / complete / total fulfillment that won't arrive until Judgment Day.

NOW WHAT? He sends us off into the **future** where we can basically **expect the unexpected**. We make plans, and often everything gets thrown completely upside down. We say, "*man proposes, and God disposes*" – and we chuckle about that because it's TRUE, and we've all experienced how life can be totally unpredictable and is, so often, the complete opposite of what we expected.

But . . . the **King of the unexpected** is ALSO the **King of keeping His promises!** We have that vertical peace with Him now, and the horizontal peace in the New Kingdom will come when no one is expecting it on a Day that will be so very far beyond shocking. So . . . we wait. And . . . we trust. We keep going. Nothing may happen exactly as we expect (or as we may want) in this life – *but* – everything will happen according to His glorious plans. His promises and His Words never fail. Ultimately we'll get everything we want and ultimately every prayer will be answered. One day we'll completely understand what God has been building through the wild and crazy history of this planet.

Therefore we always have reason to **rejoice** and **praise our King** – *both now and forever!* His plans are better than our plans. For you can bet, that the heavenly home He is preparing for us . . . is WAY BETTER than anything you could have *ever* expected!