

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Zechariah 9:9-12

The Coming King of Zion

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. 11 As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. 12 Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

9:9 Quoted in the NT as Messianic and as referring ultimately to the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Mt 21:5; Jn 12:15). (CSB)

rejoice greatly – Those words remind us of Advent. Here hidden in the words of Zechariah is of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as King. It is also a reference for all Christians to the final fulfillment of prophecy when the Lord comes again victoriously with all of His angels. (PBC)

Daughter of Zion. A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

God's people are called to welcome their coming King with joyful shouts (cf 2:10). This is a preview to the depiction of the new Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ (Rv 21:2). (TLSB)

Only the “daughter Zion/Jerusalem,” that is, the baptized, the faithful, the elect, understand all this as a cause to “rejoice greatly.” As saints we rejoice, even though as sinners still, we are identified with the original crowd in Jerusalem which, only a few days later, shouted “Crucify him.” (CSB)

your king. The Davidic (“your”) Messianic King. (CSB)

This King is unique, one of a kind, the Messiah. John Wycliffe: “Christ mounted these animals to condemn the riding of pope and cardinals, and of the inferior bishops too, who are wont to ride in superfluous pomp on war-horses decked out with gold and silk” (TT, 190). Luther: “Here there is no violence, no armor, no power, no anger, no wrath.... Here there are only kindness, justice, salvation, mercy, and every good thing” (AE 20:94). In His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus gave public proof that He is this promised King (Mt 21:1–11). (TLSB)

It is translated “for you,” dative of advantage: He comes for your good. (Leupold)

righteous. Conforming to the divine standard of morality and ethics, particularly as revealed in the Mosaic legislation; a characteristic of the ideal king (see 2Sa 23:3–4; Ps 72:1–3; Isa 9:7; 11:4–5; 53:11; Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16). (CSB)

humble. cf. Isa 53:2–3, 7; Mt 11:29. (CSB)

Jesus will bring the rampant forces of evil to unconditional surrender. It takes faith to accept this King now. It will not take faith to believe in Him as King when He returns in the clouds of heaven to claim undisputed rule. (PBC)

mounted on a donkey. A suitable choice, since the donkey was a lowly animal of peace (contrast the war-horse of v. 10) as well as a princely mount (Jdg 10:4; 12:14; 2Sa 16:2) before the horse came into common use. The royal mount used by David and his sons was the mule (2Sa 18:9; 1Ki 1:33). (CSB)

Israelites typically rode donkeys. Horses were reserved for military use. (TLSB)

This was no ordinary king and his kingdom is not of this world. Donkeys were not used in human wars, and gentleness and humility are not the stuff politics are made of. Christ establishes his kingdom first by dying, and later by rising and ascending. He establishes his kingdom in and among us today through the veiled forms of water, bread, and wine and through the foolishness of preaching.

9:10 *cut off the chariot ... war-horses ... battle bow.* A similar era of disarmament is foreseen in Isa 2:4; 9:5–7; 11:1–10; Mic 5:10–11. (CSB)

War tools have no place in the Messiah's kingdom (cf Ps 46:9). (TLSB)

All apparatus of war will be removed, Messiah's rule not being established by physical force, or maintained by military defenses. (PC)

This state will as we know, be achieved in perfection only when the new heavens and the new earth shall have come into existence. (Leupold)

Ephraim. The former the former represents the 10 northern tribes and the latter is the two tribes of the south (Judah). (PC)

peace to the nations. In sharp contrast to Alexander's empire, which was founded on bloodshed, the Messianic King will establish a universal kingdom of peace as the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. 14:16; see Ge 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). (CSB)

God's Word is the "weapon" by which He brings peace. (TLSB)

The peace (shalom) here referred to includes more than the cessation of warfare though that is primarily under consideration in a passage such as this. "Peace" is in itself a much broader concept. It includes that wealth of spiritual treasures which He alone is able to bestow, and which is referred to in the statement: "Peace I leave unto you." (Leupold)

His rule shall be from sea to sea. It will be universal (see Ps 22:27–28; 72:8–11; Isa 45:22; 52:10; 66:18). (CSB)

ends of the earth – He will extend this peace to all the world, teaching the heathen to receive his spiritual rule. (PC)

Christ's rule is universal, not limited to geographical boundaries such as earthly kingdoms. We are to be His witnesses "to the end of the earth" (Ac 1:8). (TLSB)

9:11 *as for you* – God gets personal. He makes it clear that he is talking to his chosen people. They are his because of the covenant he established and he intends to keep his promises. Throughout Scripture the covenant is often pictured as a marriage – an intensely intimate relationship. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

blood of my covenant with you. Probably the Mosaic covenant (Ex 24:3–8). (CSB)

The Lord will set Zion’s prisoners free because of His covenant with them, sealed with blood. We have eternal redemption by Christ’s blood (Heb 9:12). (TLSB)

prisoners. Perhaps those still in Babylonia, the land of exile. (CSB)

waterless pit. Cf. Ge 37:24; Jer 38:6. (CSB)

Symbolizes the hopeless condition of one under the curse of the Law. (TLSB)

This is a powerful image for at the time cisterns dug in the ground to hold water were sometimes used as cells for prisoners. The pit could also symbolize the hopeless situation of the exile, even death itself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

No dungeon is so terrible as that of sin, but Christ has power, through the blood of His covenant, to open its doors, and set free its prisoners. (CB)

9:12 return – This is an imperative to go back to their former position, that is, the “fortress,” the place of safety and strength. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

stronghold. Either (1) Jerusalem (Zion) and environs or (2) God himself (cf. 2:5). (CSB)

None need despair of relief, however desperate their case, who are willing to come to Christ for help; He is a “strong hold” to all who put their trust in Him, and will reward them with plenteous salvation. (CB)

hope. In the future delivering King (vv. 9–10). (CSB)

By grace, the Lord invites sinners to return to their stronghold, the Lord Himself. (TLSB)

Their hope is in abundance of God’s grace, since he will restore “twice” what they had previously. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

double. Full or complete restoration (cf. Isa 61:7). (CSB)

In place of despair, the Lord promises a double blessing: a secure stronghold and victory over all enemies. (TLSB)

The mind has trouble comprehending the goodness of God. Not only release from prison but the promise to receive twice as much good as we had previously received evil in our languishing. And it come to the people in similar tone to the Prophet Isaiah’s words, “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:1, 2) (PBC)

EPISTLE – Romans 7:14-25a

The Law and Sin

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Of divine origin. (TLSB)

I am. The personal pronoun and the verb, taken together, suggest that Paul is describing his present (Christian) experience. (CSB)

unspiritual. Even a believer has the seeds of rebellion in his heart. (CSB)

Part of the fallen world. (TLSB)

sold as a slave to sin.† A phrase so strong that many refuse to accept it as descriptive of a Christian. However, it may graphically point out the failure even of Christians to meet the radical ethical and moral demands of God. It also points up the persistent nature of sin. (CSB)

7:15-20 As a Christian, Paul struggles with his sinful nature. He has sinful desires but knows they are wrong. He tries to avoid sin but inevitably fails. Even as a Christian, he cannot overcome sin by his efforts. Luther: “Both expressions are true, that he himself does it and he himself does not do it. He is like a horseman. When his horses do not trot the way he wants them to, it is he himself and yet not he himself who makes the horse run in such and such a way. For the horse is not without him, and he is not without the horse. But because a carnal man certainly consents to the law of his members, he certainly himself does what sin does” (AE 25:331; see SA III III 40). (TLSB)

7:15 *I do not understand.* The struggle within creates tension, ambivalence and confusion. (CSB)

I do – katerazomai – In Romans 7:15-21 Paul uses three different Greek words for “do,” “produce behavior,” “effect a work.” Katerazomai (“produce [in deeds]”) focuses more on the effecting of a result, and “practice” has about it the idea of steady and habitual practice while poineo is a more colorless “do.” They are synonyms, and their distinguishing nuances may be of only minor importance in this passage.

7:16 *I agree that the law is good.* Even when Paul is rebellious and disobedient, the Holy Spirit reveals to him the essential goodness of the law. (CSB)

7:17 *no longer I myself who do it.* Not an attempt to escape moral responsibility but a statement of the great control sin can have over a Christian’s life. (CSB)

7:18 *nothing good dwells in me.*† A reference to man’s fallen nature, as the last phrase of the sentence indicates. Paul is not saying that no goodness at all exists in Christians, only not in their sinful nature. (CSB)

7:21 *law*.† Here means “principle” (see 3:27). (CSB)

A regular occurrence: Whenever Paul attempts good, he still sins. (TLSB)

7:22 *I delight in the law of God*. The Mosaic Law or God’s Law generally. It is difficult to see how a non-Christian could say this. (CSB)

Although our fallen nature rebels, the new nature rejoices in God’s truth. (TLSB)

inner being – God’s redeemed and forgiven child. (TLSB)

7:23 *law of my mind*. The inner being (v 22) that delights in God’s Word. (TLSB)

another law.† A principle or force at work in Paul preventing him from giving obedience to God’s law (see 3:27; 7:21). (CSB)

law of my mind. His desire to obey God’s law. (CSB)

law of sin. Essentially the same as “another law,” mentioned above. (CSB)

The power or control of sin over us. (TLSB)

7:24 *wretched man* – *talaiporos* – “Miserable, wretched, distressed,” this emphatic by word order. (QV)

Paul detests his continued sinfulness. (TLSB)

who will deliver me from this body of death – This enslaving sin merits death. (TLSB)

body of death. Figurative for the body of sin (6:6) that hung on him like a corpse and from which he could not gain freedom. (CSB)

7:25 The first half of this verse is the answer to the question stated in v. 24—deliverance comes, not through legalistic effort, but through Christ. The last half is a summary of vv. 13–24. (CSB)

I myself. The real self—the inner being that delights in God’s law (v. 22). (CSB)

with my mind – We are fallen sinners who are bound to sin, yet as God’s new creation we want to serve and obey Him. Paul neither ignores his sinfulness nor gives up. He relies on Christ alone. Luther says: “The old man is infected with all vices and has by nature nothing good in him (Romans 7:18). Now when we have come into Christ’s kingdom (John 3:5), these things must daily decrease. The longer we live the more we become gentle, patient, meek and ever turn away from unbelief, greed, hatred, envy, and arrogance. (TLSB)

7:7–25 Our struggle with sin is not a past event; it is a present reality. We know God’s will and desire to serve Him, but we cannot overcome sin. Even if we try, we fail. We cry out, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” There is only one answer: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Jesus rescues us. Though we sin daily, He continues to forgive and restore us. • Lord Jesus, I love You. Lead me in daily repentance. Forgive my sin and strengthen my faith. By Your Spirit, deliver me. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 11:25-30

Rest for the Weary

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. ²⁷ “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

11:25 *at this time* – Jesus is speaking words of severe judgment on three cities mentioned in verses 21 and 23. They had refused to repent and to believe in Jesus.

At that time (*kairōi*) Jesus declares that these things (*tauta*) have been concealed from the understanding and wise (*sophōn*) and revealed to infants (*nēpiois*). “That time” is immediately after decrying the pride and haughtiness of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, cities of Galilee that thought they should be exalted simply because the miracle worker was from their region. How timely! And what more of an emphasis on grace alone could one ask for? God has revealed Christ’s mercy and power, hidden behind his humble guise (cf. 11:2–5), not to the proud or the wise elite but to the very smallest, most helpless infant. We need not be wise to be loved. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

hidden these things from the wise and learned – Jesus is not saying educated people will be lost and the uneducated will be saved. He is simply speaking about those who wise in their own eyes and reject the invitation of the Gospel.

The wise and learned both in the days of Jesus’ ministry and in every era since, are those who will not repent. (CC)

Jesus thanked His Father for revealing the truth of the Gospel to little children rather than having the knowledge of salvation depend on human wisdom. Jesus referred to His followers as the “little ones” (10:42) and pointed to a child as the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (18:1-4). Those considered wise by earthly standards regard the word of the cross as folly (cf. Is. 29:14). St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “Those who are led by this Spirit, they are sons, and cannot be kept from their Father’s council” (SLSB, p. 150). (TLSB)

little children – The defining characteristic of the “infants” in this text should be read directly of its opposite, namely, the “wise and understanding.” Jesus is not here commending those who have responded in faith to His ministry for some positive quality in themselves. Instead, He is saying that the divine revelation comes to those who (are led by the Spirit to recognize that they) are ignorant, impotent, and incapable of saving themselves, just as a helpless infant relies completely on his parents for food, warmth, safety, and life itself. (CC)

11:26 *yes* – Literally, “Yes, Father, for this was good before you.” The ESV takes some liberties with this particular verse for no discernible reason. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

your gracious will – Jesus is by no means rejoicing in the fact that some will be lost. He is rejoicing in the fact that as God was well-pleased with his Son, this good pleasure is mine and for all people, without distinction.

God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud (James 4:6. Cf. Luke 1:52. (TLSB)

11:27 *no one knows the Father except the Son* – The majesty of the divine nature is communicated to the human nature” (CT I). (TLSB)

We come to faith, not because of the strength of our own will, but because the Son chooses (*boulētai*) to reveal (*apokalypsai*) the Father to us. Why, then, should we expect that the continuance of the Christian life should depend on the strength of our own will? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

At this point in the history of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the Father alone knows who the Son is, but the Father is already revealing that His way of salvation is through the Son, and through the Son only. (CC)

11:28 *labor and are heavy laden* – This means the anxiety and terrors of sin and death. We tire ourselves out trying to save ourselves by our own doing.

Come to me all who are weary (*kopiōntes*) and laden (*pephortismenoi*), and I will give you rest (*anapausō*). No real surprises in the Greek here, but such a compelling verse for those who live in a fast-paced culture where we often work without rest. So often we work hard and live fast because we’re never quite sure we’re measuring up. How many of our people, then, need to hear the reassurance that Christ has come not to add to our burdens, but to carry them in our place? He does the measuring up for us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

The burdens mentioned include the subtle (and perhaps not so subtle) burdens experienced in Judaism at that time with its unbalanced emphasis upon the necessity of obedience to all the commands of the Torah – both the written Torah and the expanding corpus of Jewish traditions that comprise the so-called oral Torah. (CC)

The people were burdened by the “yoke of the law” of which the rabbis spoke. They could not meet its demands with its many regulations and restrictions. Jesus invites everyone struggling with sin and the burden of the Law to come to him for rest and refreshment. He was keeping the Law in their stead and would bear their sins in his own body on the tree of the cross.

Those who acknowledge their sinfulness and realize that it is a burden too heavy for them to bear, that this load will drag them down to hell if they must bear it by themselves – they are ones to whom Jesus promises rest. It is his gift.

WILL GIVE YOU REST - The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding and guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). “Here there are two parts. The ‘labor’ and the burden signify the contrition, anxiety, and terrors of sin and death. To ‘come to’ Christ is to believe that sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. When we believe, our hearts are brought to life by the Holy Spirit through Christ’s Word. Here, therefore, are these two chief parts: contrition and faith” (Ap. XIIA 44-45). (TLSB)

11:29 *take my yoke* – A yoke was a wooden crosspiece fastened over the necks of two animals. Jewish rabbis spoke of the “yoke of the Law” as glorious obedience to God, which freed one from obligations to the world and gave rest. (Cf. Eccl 24:33; 51:26). Jesus described this yoke as heavy (Mt. 23:4) and offered His alternative, to be yoked with Him to the Gospel. One yoked to Jesus will find rest. Luther: “The yoke that Christ lays upon us is sweet, and His burden is light. When sin has been forgiven and the conscience has been liberated from the burden and the sting of sin, then a Christian can bear everything easily. Because everything within is sweet and pleasant, he willingly does and suffers everything” (AE 26:133). (TLSB)

The yoke here has recently been interpreted as implying a rabbinical yoke or set of teachings, but there appears to be little historically to substantiate that interpretation. The meaning of the passage is unchanged, however. It is well worth noting in any case that a yoke often hitched two animals together. Christ invites us to be hitched to him! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

Jesus does not promise us immunity from family, social, academic, economic and political problems. He does not promise us a Utopia. He does promise rest for the soul, freedom from the guilt and power of sin, freedom from the threat of death, freedom from the power of the devil. His yoke of discipleship is easy to wear and his burden of service to others is light.

The yoke Jesus asks us to take upon ourselves might be defined as the whole Christian life and hope. Once we have assumed that yoke, God's commandments are no longer a heavy burden that weighs us down and destroys us. Instead, they are expressions of God's will in which we delight, for we look for ways to express our thanks to God for the blessings of his grace.

Will find rest – It is not easy to be a consistent believer in Christ Jesus, finding one's rest only in that Gospel because the people of the world are constantly accusing Christians of stressing the wrong thing.

How comforting these words are to us! Weighed down by unrealistic expectations, heavy responsibilities, and nagging guilt of sins committed and imagined, we cannot bear life's demands. Admitting our false sense of wisdom and our failure to shoulder our own burdens, we hear the voice of the Savior.

11:30 *my yoke is easy* – Jesus is not saying that life is easy, but afflictions, the cross and suffering simple drive Christian closer to Jesus.

Jesus has carried all our sins and sorrows to the cross. His presence and forgiveness lightens every load. St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "Testimonies of the Truth console me, which wonderfully raise up those whom they make humble, instruct while they humiliate. Thus this same Hand that casts me down raises me up again and makes me sing with joy...This marvel the word of God, living and efficacious, produces" (SLSB, p. 62). (TLSB)

Christ calls his followers to a life of service in the Kingdom, but, unlike the rule of the Pharisees, this yoke is good/easy (*chrēstos*) and my burden (*phortion*) is light (*elaphron*). How different is this from attempts to justify ourselves? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

Crosses we are called upon to bear on account of our loyalty to our Savior are faith-strengthening experiences, for they help us to understand what Christ endured for us, and we have our Lord's promise that he will give us the strength to endure them and that he will make them channels for all kinds of blessings. The more faithfully we follow Christ, the easier his yoke and the lighter his burden becomes.

We take his yoke upon us joyfully, seeking ways to serve him in home, neighborhood, church, and vocation. We receive his rest that refreshes us for daily service and await the rest which belongs to the people of God.

Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Ephesians 2:10 is doable because it follows Ephesians 2:8-9.

Ephesians 2:8-9, "⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast."

11:25–30 The thing hidden from the wise and understanding is God’s gracious plan of salvation, the message that both Jesus and John the Baptist proclaimed. Jesus’ contemporaries by and large rejected Him, preferring to live under the heavy yoke of the Law as the way to salvation. Jesus invites us to receive the yoke of the Gospel, which guarantees true rest. • Dearest Jesus, I praise You that when I am yoked to You, no burden is too heavy. Amen. (TLSB)