

November 27, 2022 at St. Matthew, Port Washington, WI

Jesus is Coming as Your King!

I like to think that there was a rabbi or scribe in Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday who was facing Bethany and Bethphage in the east and saw Jesus silhouetted against the rising sun in the east. I like to think that there was a rabbi or scribe who smiled as he connected the dots. All of the clues were there. In the last chapter of the Old Testament, Malachi 4, the last promise of the Messiah described him as the rising sun with healing in its rays. The second to last book of the Old Testament, Zechariah, said that the promised Messiah would ride into Jerusalem as a king on a donkey. In Ezekiel 43, the promised Messiah is described as coming from the east. I like to think that there was a rabbi or scribe who saw Jesus on that first Palm Sunday riding from the east on a donkey toward Jerusalem and recognized that Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies. Most of us have not been to Jerusalem and been able to look east toward Bethany. I've been told it's a view you never forget. What's most important, though, is that you see your Savior Jesus who is coming to your heart as your king.

If a child has a special gift in mind – like a Red Rider BB gun – and does not get it for Christmas, his Christmas is ruined. A lot of people are disappointed with Christ and Christmas because they were expecting a different gift than what Jesus came to give them. Many people expect Christmas will be some sort of magic wand over their lives to pay all their bills, settle all family arguments, heal every sickness and bring world peace. Unfortunately, many people misunderstand these words from Isaiah. The United Nations Plaza in New York city quotes :4, **“They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”** The United Nations quotes Isaiah to promote their goal of world peace. We're all for world peace, but that is not the kind of peace that Jesus is coming to give. In fact, Jesus says that he came to bring a sword. (Mt 10:34)

There are a good number of churches which misuse these words from Isaiah 2 to preach some sort of heaven on earth. They surmise that all nuclear weapons will be disarmed and all armies will be sent home because everyone will live at peace. Such churches cross the line and get into politics as they promote any candidate and cause that wants to stop any war. They also get tripped up with verse 2 where Isaiah says, **“In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills.”** They conclude that Mt. Zion in Palestine will have some sort of volcanic eruption and grow taller than Mt. Everest. Also, when Isaiah says, in verse 2, that the nations will stream to the mountain of the Lord, they figure that believers from all over the world will get a plane ticket and travel to Jerusalem. They think that the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is more holy and more significant to God than any other piece of real estate on earth. That is why so many get so excited about the modern state of Israel which began in 1948 as if it is the fulfillment of some Bible prophecy. It's not.

Certainly, we would like world peace and we want all people to be believers, but Jesus clearly told us that his kingdom is not of this world. He told us that on this earth there would be wars and rumors of wars until the end of time. Jesus told us that believers would face persecution until the end of time. Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace on earth, but division. Jesus told the woman in John 4 that worshiping at the temple in Jerusalem is not what was so important. What matters is faith in the heart.

So how are we to make sense of Isaiah 2? Isaiah says that there will be peace on earth, but Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace on earth. A few weeks ago, I preached on the glory that is waiting for us in heaven. The Apostle John described heaven in earthly terms so that we could understand it. That's what Isaiah is doing here too. He is describing the peace of forgiveness and the joy of heaven in earthly terms that Old Testament believers, especially, would understand.

In the Old Testament times, Jerusalem and the temple were built on the top of Mt. Zion. Mt. Zion is where lambs were brought for sacrifice. Jesus was riding into Jerusalem and offering himself as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Mt. Zion is where God saved the world. Old Testament believers must have dreamed, "Wouldn't it be great if people everywhere believed in the promised Messiah and came to the temple in Jerusalem. Mt. Zion would be the most important and crowded place in the world." That's what heaven will be like. Everyone will be a believer. They will not be infected with sin anymore. They will not fight and argue. They will live in perfect peace. It will be just as awesome AS IF all wars on this earth stopped. In heaven, not only will there be peace between people, but there will be perfect peace between God and us. God the Judge will not be angry with us for our sins because all of our sins will be gone. That is the peace that Jesus came to bring when he was born. That is the peace that Isaiah is picturing for us here. And you are the nations that Isaiah streaming to Mt. Zion and rejoicing in Jesus as your Savior.

It is easy to get caught up in the idea of an earthly religion. I heard a football player who won a close game say, "God is good. God is good." I wondered if God would still have been good if his team lost. If people think of Jesus as a financial advisor, family therapist or miracle medical worker, they will be disappointed if God does not get them out of debt, or make everyone in the family happy or give perfect health. They will be just like the boy who was disappointed on Christmas because he did not get a BB gun. An earthly mindset of Christmas can easily infect us too. If we are focused on earthly things, I guarantee you will be disappointed in some way – if our tree is not perfect, or if we do not get the presents we want, or if we do not get to listen to our favorite music. Sometimes when the details and decorations don't go the way we want, we can get so angry that we yell at our own dear family members instead of rejoicing in our Savior.

There has been a lot of buzz the last few months since Queen Elizabeth in England died. Her son is now King Charles III. Although he represents all things England to his country and the world, he really does not do much. He officially opens the sessions of parliament. Then, once parliament decides any new legislation, he officially endorses whatever they decided. That's about it. We, however, get excited that our King Jesus is coming because he is coming to save us.

Ever since Adam & Eve committed that first sin, our world has been infected with sin and is suffering. Nations filled with sinful people have always been fighting wars and they will continue to fight wars until the world ends. People will continue to be greedy and selfish. We can not even get rid of it in our own hearts. We can not stop sinning. We can not stop ourselves from growing older and dying. We need help. We need a Savior. We need Jesus. As we see Jesus riding into Jerusalem, we join that Palm Sunday crowd in shouting with joy, "Hosanna, Jesus! Come and save us! Come and rescue us!" Because Jesus took the blame for all of our sins, God is not going to blame you. Because of Jesus you will live forever in the perfect peace of the real heaven. That is why the Apostle Paul encouraged the Philippians to rejoice in our second lesson this morning. We rejoice to see that Jesus is coming as our Savior King.

We can be sure of this because God tells us so in his Word and his Word is always true. In verse 3, Isaiah explained, “[The Lord] will teach us his ways. ... the law (instruction) will go out from Zion (where the Temple was), the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (the city where the temple was).” If you want to know what God wants you to know and believe, you have to remember that he only speaks to us through his Word.

In verse 5, Isaiah encourages God’s people, “**Come, descendants of Jacob** (that’s a code name for the believers, for you), **let us walk in the light of the Lord.**” He does not say, “Come and read your tea leaves and check your horoscope.” He does not say, “Take a survey to decide what is true for you.” Or, “Think of an opinion that makes you happy.” He directs us to God’s light, to God’s Word.

There was a lot of excitement last week for all of the “Black Friday” specials. People rushed to the store to get a good deal on Christmas presents. How much more will we rush to get salvation for free revealed in God’s Word. It is only in God’s Word that you will hear about the seriousness of your sin and the sincerity of your Savior, Jesus Christ. As the noise of the materialistic world grows louder at this time of the year, we need to especially make sure that we are tuned in to God’s Word. That is why we have special services on Wednesday nights during Advent. I hope you come as we tune in to God’s Word again and walk in the light of the Lord. Spending time with God’s Word is more important than setting up a Christmas tree or sending out Christmas cards or shopping for gifts. There’s nothing wrong with trees, or cards or gifts, of course. I hope you have lots of fun with those things. But they simply cannot be more important in your heart than connecting to Jesus. Whatever your level of devotions and prayers, be aware of the materialistic noise of the world all around you and recommit yourself to standing strong on God’s Word. Prioritize God’s Word in our daily life.

Just as Isaiah encouraged the believers (:3), “**Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob,**” we, also, will encourage friends and relatives to come to church with us so that they, too, can see and believe in Jesus as their Savior and look forward to eternal life in heaven where everything will be perfectly peaceful forever. It was certainly very exciting to see Jesus riding into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. The whole city was thundering with excitement. Did everybody recognize that Jesus was the promised Messiah – a spiritual Savior and not just someone who would get rid of the Romans and make their lives better? Certainly not. Even his own disciples were still a little mixed up. How blessed are you to know that Jesus is the Savior from sin and death that you truly need. And, with a heart of faith, you rejoice to know that Jesus is coming as your King. Amen.