

“Humble Confrontation?”—Zechariah 9:9

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Humble Confrontation?”, is Zechariah 9:9 → *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.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

There are two necessary activities of life which appear to work in opposition to each other: humility and confrontation. Humility is defined as an act “reflecting, expressing, or offered in a spirit of deference or submission.” (Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.) Positively, it embodies a spirit of kindness with a servant heart, expressed in meekness and gentleness with a willingness to overlook shortcomings and forgive. Unfortunately, it seems that those who function with humility or live with “humble means” can easily be taken advantage of by others through sinful manipulation, abuse and arrogance.

Confrontation is defined as “the clashing of forces or ideas” usually involved with “a face-to-face meeting.” (Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.)

Confrontation can appear to be a negative aggressive behavior toward another person which affects him adversely, many times eliciting a reaction of rebellion and anger. Positively, however, it is necessary to help a person whose choices are leading him down a road of self-sabotaging destruction. It is usually intended to help that person “come to his senses,” admit he truly has a self-sabotaging problem and be open to the help available to set him on the path to better choices in life. Sounds like the practice of rehabilitation facilities and programs around the world, doesn't it? Actually, it was the purpose for Jesus' “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday.

Amidst a great prophecy concerning God's judgment on Israel's enemies and the promise of peace, Yahweh spoke in our text of the entrance of their King right into their history. It would be a time which would cause God's people to *shout aloud* for joy because of the righteousness and *salvation* that He would accomplish for His people. However, such joy flows only from humility.

The humility portrayed in this prophecy by a *king . . . coming . . . humble and mounted on a donkey* was somewhat of a commentary on the history of God's people during Zechariah's ministry. God's people had been humbled, and humiliated, having just come out of a period of exile and oppression in Babylon. Why? They had brought such humiliation upon themselves because they refused to repent of their sins

and trust in Yahweh **alone** for identity, salvation and daily living. True to His love as our Father, *the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.* (cf. Hebrews 12:6) Thus, the LORD disciplined His people by Babylonian captivity to bring them back into a loving relationship with Himself.

In 538 BC, when King Cyrus decreed their release from exile, they immediately set to the task of rebuilding the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. It was a temple reflecting their humble state indeed. In fact, *many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house (i.e. the magnificent temple built by King Solomon), wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid.* (cf. Ezra 3:12) Maybe they were tears of sorrow as it reminded them of how they forfeited the LORD's presence among them because of their sin and rebellion. Maybe they were tears of joy because they would have His presence with them once again. Either way, over five hundred years later they would experience the presence of Yahweh in more than a temple built with hands. They would experience the LORD's presence in the person of a King of humility Whose name would be Jesus.

This prophecy in our text was fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. While this fulfillment stressed the **humble** characteristics of King Jesus, His main purpose for visiting Jerusalem

was **confrontation**. His actions recorded in Mark 11:15 give witness to this fact. On the following Monday Jesus *entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons*. Throughout the week He specifically confronted the religious leaders and teachers about their hypocrisy, unbelief and misleading of God's people. As He taught His disciples in private He even confronted them about their shallow commitment to Him. (cf. Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27)

Notice how our text describes our humble King—*righteous and having salvation is He*. Not only does His righteousness distinguish Him from so many of the unrighteous kings who ruled over God's people through the years but He is completely righteous as the **sinless** Son of God! A century earlier the prophet Jeremiah spoke about Him as executing *justice and righteousness in the land*, being called by this name: *The LORD is **our** righteousness*. (cf. Jeremiah 23:5-6) In order to bring *salvation* it was necessary for Jesus to *execute justice and righteousness* by confronting sin and the devil in humiliation.

The humble manner of Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem was fitting in light of the events which unfolded during the week. In humility He washed the disciples' feet, performing the task of the household servant to set His disciples an example of serving one another. (cf. John

13:12-17) He allowed Himself to be arrested, mocked, unjustly accused and ridiculed. He took beatings along with His suffering and death on a cross without retaliation. As Philippians 2:8 says: *And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Why? To confront the devil and your sin once and for all with perfect justice and righteousness for your salvation.*

The people on that first Palm Sunday were welcoming King Jesus by shouting, *“Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”* (cf. Mark 11:9-10) It may be they were rejoicing that their salvation had finally come in King Jesus Who would confront the Romans and set up the kingdom of Israel again as during the time of King David. However, Jesus did not come to set up a kingdom that was bound to time, space and a particular people. He came to bring all people into God’s eternal kingdom by confronting the devil and defeating his power. Thus His kingdom is God’s rule of grace by His Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who trust in His righteous and perfect obedience to God’s law and His righteous and perfect sacrifice for their sin. As Romans 14:17 says: *The kingdom of God is . . . a matter of . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

As we celebrate Palm Sunday it is actually a celebration of belonging to King Jesus and a desire to serve Him in His kingdom. Such service

displayed as His subjects is unique from the world's service in that it is characterized by humility. It is a humility which has a genuine concern for the spiritual well-being of others and will confront sin with gentleness and respect for Jesus. (cf. 1 Peter 3:15) It is a humility within which you will also allow yourself to be confronted of your sin, confess it and cling to the righteousness of Jesus Christ for forgiveness. It is the characteristic which identifies believers in Christ Jesus as we are commanded in Colossians 3:12-13 →

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,  
compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,  
bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another,  
forgiving each other;  
as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Amen.*

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