

Encouragement From Our King

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 July 2016

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] And turn in your Bibles to Zechariah 9. And our scripture reading will be Zechariah 9, verses 9 through 17.

! And the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope. Even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you. I will bend Judah as I bend my bow and fill it with Ephraim.

I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and make you like a warrior's sword. Then the Lord will appear over them. His arrow will flash like lightning.

[1:18] The sovereign Lord will sound the trumpet. He will march in the storms of the south. And the Lord Almighty will shield them. They will destroy and overcome with sling stones.

They will drink and roar as with wine. They will be full like a bowl used for sprinkling the corners of the altar. The Lord their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people.

They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. How attractive and beautiful they will be. Grain will make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women.

Good fathers aren't just disciplinarians saying, Here's the standard. You better get meat in it. Good fathers know that children can get easily discouraged.

And so Paul says, Don't exasperate your children, fathers. Don't do things that get them frustrated and discouraged, leaving them at their wits end, so to speak.

[2:21] Or in Colossians, Paul says, Fathers, don't embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. We don't want to have discouraged children.

And so good fathers are part cheerleaders. In the race of life, they are standing beside their children and cheering them on, encouraging them in the way.

And they know their children's weakness, and they meet that weakness, not with scorn, and not with a harsh hand, but with encouragement. So it's one thing to go on a long trip when it's just you and another adult.

You can go a long, long way without stopping. And the stops can be brief. But when you have kids, it's a lot of stopping. It's a lot of getting out of the car to stretch.

It's longer than you probably need to eat lunch. Snacks are always on hand. Because kids are easily discouraged. Good fathers know that, and they're happy to meet that.

[3:25] And they aren't griping that the kids are slowing them down, saying, let's go, let's go, let's go. And good fathers know their children. Well, God is a good father.

God's a good father. And he knows his children need discipline, but he knows they also need a lot of encouragement. And he's happy to provide it.

And Zechariah 9, 9 through the rest of the chapter, is a section of encouragement. Now, the whole book of Zechariah is meant to be an encouraging book.

It's meant to meet discouraged people. And people who are stuck. That's the word I've been using. And getting them unstuck.

Getting them going again. Getting them encouraged. Putting the heart back in them. And so, maybe you know what it's like to be stuck in depression. Trapped in it.

[4:26] You want to get out, but you can't. You just want to sleep. You want to run away. You don't want to live anymore. You don't want to face life anymore. Maybe you know what it's like to be stuck in the past.

These are all things that Zechariah's people face. Stuck in the past with your past sins. And so, it's like you're living in a little room. And this little room has no windows and no doors. And it's just you and your sin. And it's just like you live staring at it. Staring at each other. Maybe it's stuck in a feeling of powerlessness.

I can't do this. And that's the first. And that's the last word in your heart and in your mind.

I can't do this. Now, sometimes God calls us to do hard things. To go through trials. Long trials. Hard trials.

[5:24] And it can seem like it's too much. It can seem like it's too hard. Too long. And we say we can't do it. Instead of being trapped in a room with just our sin. Now, we're trapped in this room of, I can't do what God is calling me to do.

With that feeling of helplessness. It's too hard for me. Kids, maybe you remember the story of Rumpelstiltskin.

And in that story, the king of the land meets the miller. And the miller, wanting to brag and impress the king, tells the king that he has a daughter that can spin straw into gold.

And so, obviously, the king's eyes get really big. He's a greedy man. He knows a good deal when he sees it. And so, he takes the miller's daughter and he brings her, takes her out of her home and takes her to the castle.

And puts her in a room, locks the room, locks her in this room full of straw. And he says, now, spin this straw into gold or else.

[6:27] And, of course, the miller's daughter looks around. And, of course, she can't do it. She doesn't have the first idea of how to do it. And so, she throws herself down, weeping.

It's too much for her. Sometimes we can feel that way. God has put us in this room and it seems like he's calling us to do things that we just can't do. It's too hard.

It's too much. Now, God never leaves us without resources. He does put us in hard places, but he also always gives us Jesus Christ to help us to fight through those things and to work through those things.

But, if you're there, if you're stuck in your past, stuck in just a sense of defeated depression, stuck with your weakness, you need encouragement.

And God comes in Zechariah 9 with encouragement for people that are discouraged. Now, we saw the first encouragement about a month ago.

[7:31] It's Zechariah 9.9. So, this first encouragement is going to be review of what we looked at a month ago. 9.9, he says, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.

Shout, daughter of Jerusalem. See, your king comes to you. Now, who's saying those words?

Who's telling the Israelites to shout for joy, to sing, to rejoice?

Well, it's God. It's their Lord saying this to them. He's meeting them as sort of a cheerleader to encourage them. He's saying, celebrate. Your king is coming to you.

He comes to you, and he's gentle. He's riding on a donkey. And we looked at all of this. He's going to be your king. There's a lot of kings, but you've never had one that's just for you.

He won't be like all the world's kings and the world's leaders. This will be a king that you can rejoice in, that you can give your heart to, that you can give your undivided loyalty to. There's nothing wrong with this king.

[8:34] He's righteous. And so from the inside of this king to the outside of him, Jesus was perfect. Whole, healthy, beautiful, perfection.

Perfect in kindness. Perfect in patience. Perfect in love. Perfect in hope. Perfect in goodness and gentleness and every other virtue.

And the Lord comes and says, now look, this is your king. He belongs to you. He's for you. This one who's so perfect. And he has salvation.

Or he'll be saved. And either way, it carries both sort of ideas that he's going to save through suffering. This king knows what it's like to be put to the extreme and for God to rescue him.

And so he knows what it's like to escape from the pit of death. And through his escape, he is going to be able to offer salvation to you. And so it's by Jesus Christ's death and then God raising him on the third day that salvation is offered to all of us.

[9:44] Now there's hope for us against our sin and hope in the face of death because he has risen. And it says he's gentle. He's gentle.

Well, we saw this little video of this mama bird. And this little baby bird was trying to crawl under his mama. And the problem was there was three other little chicks already under there.

And it's not a very big bird. And she was sitting on a lot. But the mom just waited so patiently while this baby bird scooted and found its way. And everyone's rustling around until finally it's all calm.

And they each found their spot. That's Jesus. He's gentle. So the Lord says to his people, rejoice. Your king is coming to you. Your king comes to you.

He's not abandoning you. He's not leaving you. He's not leaving you in your depression and you're dealing with your sin. He's not leaving you with your powerlessness and your weakness. He's coming. And he's mighty.

[10:48] He's strong. He's royal. And he's gentle. And he's kind. And he's bringing salvation. He's the good news. That's the first reason we need to continue to be encouraged.

Because not one of us here is without a king who is powerful and who can save. Now, in verse 10, we see the second encouragement. And this is where we get into some new material.

Verse 10, you see the second encouragement. God's going to bring peace for his people. Peace. Rest. Lack of no warfare. He says, I will take away the chariots and the war horses and the battle bow from Jerusalem.

All these things. There's not going to be invaders. No more invaders. No more attackers. No more sieges. No more persecution. No more wars and threats of war.

No more danger. No more sword. No more war against God's people. Because King Jesus, his rule is going to extend from sea to sea.

[11:50] From the river, that is the Euphrates, to the ends of the earth. So, we need to be careful that we don't misread verse 9, where it talks about how gentle this king is.

He's gentle and riding on a donkey. We have to be careful that we don't misread that to think that he is weak. Or he can't rule. Or he doesn't have authority. He doesn't have power.

He's a wimp. He's effeminate. No, he's going to proclaim peace. He's going to proclaim it. He's going to send out a royal decree that there will be peace in my land.

And that peace will be enforced. And peace will exist from shore to shore. From sea to sea.

Because there won't be any outsiders.

There won't be any nations that fall outside of his dominion. Christ shall have dominion. The nations his empire shall be. And so this gentle king will say to the nations, just as he said to the winds and the waves on the Sea of Galilee, Peace be still.

[12:58] And immediately there was calm. You remember in the Bible, the nations, the world, it's often pictured as this raging, roiling sea, tossing and turning all over itself.

And with monsters in that sea. But Jesus is strong. And just with a word he could calm the Sea of Galilee. With a word he could calm the Sea of humanity.

And so his word subdues the nations. And so we need to make sure that we're not misreading verse 9. He's not weak. He's not passive. He didn't come to see what would happen to him.

He came to do something. He's not just Jesus, meek and mild. He's not in a manger anymore. He is on a throne. And he rules over the nations.

And his word has gone out. You can have peace. There is peace. There will be peace. Peace with this king. And the truth is, is that no matter who you are, you need this peace that Jesus offers.

[14:09] Peace. Psalm 2 says, kiss the sun, lest you be destroyed. Come in into his throne room.

Bow down. Accept his rule. Confess what you've done. Confess what you've been doing. Turn away from your own kingdom.

Turn away from the idea that I'm going to set the standards for my life. I'm going to live for me. My primary loyalty is to me. My primary duty and my primary, what I want to see in life is the extension of my kingdom.

Where I'm thinking and I am hoping that my kingdom comes. But instead, we need to come to Jesus, the real king. And the way we get peace with him is saying, your kingdom come.

Not my kingdom, your will, not mine. And so he promises, whoever comes to him, peace. No more hostilities. Christians, how wonderful it is that there's now no hostilities between you and God.

[15:16] The war is over. His bow has been hung up. He's for us. And we found grace under his wings. And so that's another reason we should take great encouragement.

That God is going to bring us peace. This raging, roiling world isn't going to go on forever. There's going to be years and centuries and eons and ages of peace.

And we're going to be there because of what Jesus has done. He's not a wimp. He will rule from sea to sea till sun and moon are no more.

The third encouragement is found in verses 11 and 12. And it's an encouragement because it's an invitation to return. It's an invitation to come back. To leave the place where they are, this waterless pit.

To hope again. The heart of this encouragement is found in verse 12 where he says, return to your fortress. He's saying, return to me, oh prisoners of hope.

[16:24] And so where are they? They're stuck in this waterless pit. Like Jeremiah was thrown into the cistern. Like Joseph was thrown down into the well.

They're down there. They're imprisoned in what seems like a hopeless situation. We can't get out. We can't climb out. We can't make it better. There's nothing we can do.

But the Lord says to them, I'm not done with you. And that's the encouraging thing God says to each one of you, brothers and sisters. He's always saying, I'm not done with you. I haven't given you up.

He says, because of the blood of my covenant, because of my sworn blood sealed oath to be your God.

And for you to be my people, I'm going to free you. And so he comes into our prison. He comes in to our waterless pit and he throws us this line and he says, I'm still here.

[17:22] I'm still here. I'm still with you. There's a way forward. There's a hope. I can restore you. And God is saying, believe that about me. Believe that I am a restoring, forgiving God, blessing God.

And if we believe that, you know what we do? We return to him. We repent. You know, when people don't repent, they don't repent when they don't think they have anything good to return to.

They don't repent when they don't think God will forgive them. When God won't help them, when God can't help them.

We don't repent when we don't believe in God's goodness and his mercy and his forgiveness. But we will repent when we believe in God's forgiveness and his good graciousness.

So the prodigal son repented and headed toward home when he, one, came to the end of himself. But on the other hand, he started to think, you know, my father isn't really such a bad guy after all.

[18:35] Even his servants, even his, the men that work for him, have plenty to eat. They're not going hungry.

And if my father treats his servants that way, I can return to him. And even if I have to be a servant, I know I'm not going to starve. Because he's good. He'll see to that. He'll take care of me. And so with that encouragement, with that in mind that, you know what, my father is actually, I might, in his mind, he's thinking, I might not be able to come all the way back.

But he'll at least take me in. He's that good. He'll provide for me. And so here's this third encouragement. God says, return to me. It's laying out his heart to us.

So quit hoping in this broken sister and quit hoping that you're going to somehow be able to get out of this water, waterless pit on your own. I'm returning to you to bless you. And I will restore you.

Now, that, that call to repent is encouraging for a few reasons. And the first is, it says that there's a way forward. You know what Satan likes to do?

[19:44] He likes to tempt us to sin. And then when we fall into it, he likes to say, there's no way back. There's no way back. But the call to repentance is God saying, there's a way forward.

There's a way back. There's hope. It's powerful, secondly, because it tells us something about God's heart. What's, what's driving all of this?

What's driving him to say, come back to me, come back to me? Well, he says, because of the blood of my covenant. Now, God isn't reaching out. God doesn't reach out to us on a whim.

Because the mood strikes him to be nice today. He reaches out because he is, he is blood bound. He is blood bound to love us.

But don't get that wrong. We can't get that wrong. He, he didn't bind himself. He didn't take an oath. He didn't make a promise in order to sort of hold himself to that standard.

[20:55] He gave an oath and he gave a promise in order that we would find comfort. That we would know that this really is his heart. He promises it not for his sake to, like, remind him of what he said.

But to remind us. To say, this is how committed I am to you. And so, he put it on himself to love us. He put it upon himself.

That whoever would return, he would accept. He would bring them back. We sing in that hymn, day by day. There's a line that says, The protection of his child and treasure is a charge that on himself he has laid.

God is looking over people who can take care of his child and his treasure. And no one is good enough. And so, he lays it upon himself.

And he says, I will love them. I will take care of them. I will protect them. And that's encouraging. It's encouraging. This call to repentance is encouraging. Thirdly, because when God calls us to repent, he's calling us back to himself.

[22:08] Personal. Relational. It's not just a simple change of behavior. It's a change of direction in our heart. And God is saying, you're away.

Come back. I want you close. To reconnect with him. To walk again in love. Father and child.

Father and son. Father and daughter. The call to repentance is God saying, I want this relationship to be good again. Our sin separates us.

Repentance is leaving our hopelessness. Leaving our despair. And holding on to his hand again until we get back. The fourth encouragement. Encouragement. So we've seen three so far.

The fourth encouragement is, in this passage, is that God is going to use us. Use us to fight against his enemies and our enemies.

[23:04] He will use us to fight. So, on my Wednesday night class, we're talking about, the title of the class is, What do you think of me and why do I care?

It's about fear of man. And peer pressure. And thinking through those issues. And, sort of the framework of that class is, there's three questions that we're trying to answer.

The first question is, who is God? The second question is, who am I? And the third question is, who are all these people? Who are they? Now, that second question.

Of, who am I? Now, how do you think little Judah was answering that question of, Who am I? This is who I am. Who's my identity?

What do they feel like? What do they think like? Well, in Zachariah's day, there was probably a lot of reasons to think, Well, here we are. We got a tiny temple.

[24:07] We're on the backside of an empire. We have no king. We're helpless. We're lumps of forgotten clay. We're useless. We're bumps on the log.

God can't do anything with me. My best days are behind me. And God says, I'm going to use you as weapons against your enemies.

I'm going to use you as weapons. And I'm going to fight with you. Verse 13 says, I will bend Judah as a bow. And I will fill it with Ephraim. So Judah's going to be the bow. Ephraim's going to be the arrow.

And then later he says, I will make you like a warrior sword. And so this is the question of, Okay, God is coming to his discouraged people. And they're saying, Who am I?

I'm useless. I'm helpless. God can't use me. My best days are over. Everything like that. And God says, No, that's not what I'm going to make you. That's not who you are.

[25:04] You're going to be hard. You're going to be strong. You're going to be dangerous. I'm going to send you against your enemies. So the whole mood of this passage is offensive, not defensive.

Toward victory, not toward defeat. It says, I will stir them up. Do you notice that? In verse 13, I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and make you like a warrior sword.

Remember back in Genesis 3 where God said, I will put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Who's picking the fight, so to speak?

The Lord is. Serpent, I'm going to turn them against you. Jesus says the gates of hell will not stand against the church.

Gates are defensive. The church is on the offense. And the church is advancing. And hell can't do anything about it. And so we have to get this in our minds and in our hearts where it becomes a part of who we are that we are not on the retreating side.

[26:13] We are not falling back. King Jesus isn't leading a long defeat. He's leading us to victory. And we are his weapons.

Romans 6. It says, Offer the parts of your body to God as instruments of righteousness. In the NIV. And the word literally is weapons of righteousness.

Weapons of righteousness. One way God wants you to think about yourself and your body is as a weapon. That you are going to fill up with righteousness and live it out.

And that's encouraging. Because by God's grace, he wants us to think of ourselves as not weapons sitting on a shelf, but weapons for use. Weapons prepared.

So by God's grace, we aren't useless. We aren't helpless. It's not like we are, these can't do anything. He equips us to fight. He goes with us in the fight.

[27 : 16] And he's the one that says, Let's get up. Let's get going. Let's go fight. Now the fifth encouragement is that God, in verse 14, we see that God will fight for us.

Not only will God use us to fight, but God himself is going to come and fight for us. This king that he is promising, the Lord Jesus is going to come and fight for us.

And so here the battle lines are drawn. You can imagine it. An enemy is over here. One army over here. One army over there. God has roused his sons against the sons of Greece.

And the battle lines are drawn. And the smell of battle is in the air. And it's tense. And it's thick. And the soldiers are getting themselves ready. There's fear.

On every face. There's sweat rolling down people's eyes as they're getting ready to go into battle. And verse 14 says, the Lord will appear over them.

[28 : 23] So the lines are drawn up. Soldiers are spoiling for battle. And suddenly, it says this huge, gigantic warrior steps on to the scene of the battle.

And he looms over them. Well, who is it? Well, it was that king who was gentle and riding on a donkey.

And now no donkey can hold him. And he looms over the battlefield and his feet are crushing trees and mountains as he goes to fight the enemies of God.

And silence falls as they see him take out his bow. At the beginning of battles, in order to signal the beginning, you would launch a flaming arrow towards the enemy.

And he takes out his bow. And he launches his arrow. And it's not like a single flaming arrow. It's like a lightning bolt. And the whole world sees it. Everyone is called into the battle.

[29 : 24] And then the Lord takes his trumpet. And he blares the attack signal.

He blares march. And it says he will march in the storms of the south. So the clouds are whirling around him. Hurricanes and tornadoes and monsoons and blizzards and all around him as he marches out to fight against our enemies.

And in the battle, verse 15 says, the Lord Almighty will shield his people. He will shield them. So he takes out his shield and behind his shield, we are invincible.

We can't be touched. We can't be hurt. And then in the roar of the battle, God's people will fight. And it says, they will overcome with sling stones and they will roar with wine.

Now, the picture is, of a warrior in battle frenzy. So in the ancient world, men would intoxicate themselves with wine and alcohol and drugs and all sorts of things and whip themselves up into a battle frenzy, into this berserker rage.

[30 : 42] And in that rage, nothing could stop them. They felt no pain. they didn't feel any fear. And that's what's going, that's what this verse is talking about.

It's sort of hard to translate because it's saying something like, they'll eat the sling stones like bread. And they'll roar with wine.

And so God will rouse his sons and make them into these unstoppable warriors. And so at the end of the day, they're covered. They're full of blood like the bulls that were used to sprinkle the altar. We're full of blood. They're full of blood. And then now as we come to verse 16, it says, the Lord their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people.

That's sort of the final summary. They're saved. They're his sheep. That's a different picture of us, isn't it? Now we're not warriors. Now we're sheep. And he's the shepherd and he protects his sheep and he saves them.

[31 : 54] And now the world's armies and the world's enemies are totally wrecked. And Jesus says, now there's peace. I said there would be peace.

Now there is peace. He said his rule would extend from sea to sea and now it does. And King Jesus says, now there's peace. There's rest for my terrified people because their enemies are no more.

The battle's over. And that's encouraging even now because Jesus says, I am with you to the very end of the age. This king who is coming, this warrior who is coming, says, right now, I am with you. What are you going through this week? What mission are you on? Who are you trying to disciple? Who are you trying to teach? Where are you advancing against the enemy and the enemy is fighting back?

Where are you suffering? Where do you need help? Jesus says, I am with you. This king is with you now with all of his strength. He'll never leave his bride.

[33:01] He bought her. He loves her. He's going to stay by her side. He died for her and he's going to protect her. And so we need to take that to heart. Look who's on your side. With him, with him, you have invincible power and impenetrable protection.

Now, sixth and last, after the battle, God will make his people beautiful and whole. That's the sixth encouragement. What is waiting for each one of us Christians?

Well, this verse, where God makes his people beautiful and whole, he says, I will proclaim peace and now there is peace. And he says, I'm going to restore to them twice everything that they've lost and now look at them.

They will sparkle in the land like jewels and his crown. So after the battle is all over, here are his people. Put yourself there.

Here you are going to be beautiful and glorious. Our bodies will become like his glorious body. So what we will be is going to be something like what Jesus is now.

[34:12] So go to Revelation 1 and read that description of Jesus. And even though it's couched in poetry and in imagery, it's going to be something like that.

God says, I'm going to do this for you. In verse 17, how attractive and beautiful they will be. Grain will make the young men thrive and the new wine the young women. And so here we are at long last.

God says, you're not in a pit. The pit's long gone. The waterless pit, the discouragement, the little room stuck where you're stuck with your sin, where you're stuck in your powerlessness, where you're stuck in your sadness and your depression, where you're stuck in your hopelessness. All that is far, far behind us. And so here we are, not afraid, not depressed, not anxious, not overcome, thriving, whole, healthy. That's our future.

That's what God is going to do for us. So 1 Peter, chapter 5, it says, And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

[35:25] To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. So here we are, our little children, easily discouraged. God knows.

God doesn't despise us. He doesn't say, why don't you just believe, get yourself together. No, he gently carries the lambs in his arms. And in Zechariah 9, he comes with this great encouragement, your king is coming.

He's going to proclaim peace. He's going to use you to fight. He's going to fight for you. He is going to make you beautiful. He says, I'm going to restore you and make you firm and steadfast.

You want an encouraging and a cheerful idea? There's not going to be another fall. There will never be another going back to this kind of place once we get there.

No more pits. No more trapped in little rooms. No more running alone. No more feeling abandoned. So our running days and our orphanage days and our hospital days are all over.

[36:38] And he says, there's never going to be going back to that. And that's really encouraging to think about. Once we get through this life and we get through the end, we're going into a new age, a new creation.

The old is forgotten and gone. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the wonderful plan that you have for us.

That you know the plans that you have for us to give us a hope and a future to not harm us. please help us to take these things to heart.

To see you in your glory and in your splendor and in your grace and to live upon you. This week, we are going to have situations and occasions when we need to draw strength from our mighty king, our coming king.

will you please help us, Holy Spirit, to draw upon him, to believe in him, to not stay in the waterless pit, but to return again to find help and grace in our hour of need.

[37 : 56] And Lord Jesus, I do pray that every person here would be found to be on your side on that day with you fighting for them and not against them.

pray that you would wake any who are asleep and make them come to their senses to see that this life cannot and it will not last and the things that they are living for will betray them and leave them empty and short.

Pray that you would bring deliverance even this week. In Jesus' name, Amen.