

A Humble King

The Jewish people had been oppressed for hundreds of years before Zechariah prophesied that a king was coming who would be 'triumphant and victorious' (Zech. 9: 9). But, ironically, instead of coming with all the symbols of power and might, Zechariah said that this king would come humbly 'riding on a donkey', and not even on a full-grown donkey, but on a 'foal of a donkey'. Of course, this foretold Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem before He was to endure His Passion and death.

The Jews had been praying for deliverance from their oppressors over the centuries as they had been attacked, taken into slavery, exiled from their homeland, and had their land occupied by foreign forces. And now Zechariah was promising them a king unlike any other they had known, a humble king. How could they rally around him? Could such a person defeat their enemies?

In the Gospel (Matt. 11:25-30), Jesus shows Himself to be that humble king. He has been trying to teach His disciples about the kingdom of heaven but they are not getting it. He tells them that, because the wisdom of God is usually contrary to what the world calls common sense, their hearts and minds are not open to understanding it. He tells them that they need to receive the teachings of God with the innocence and openness of children.

Jesus gives the Jewish people a gentle admonition but He does not become frustrated and angry with them. Instead, He shows His capacity for compassion. He recognizes that they are carrying the burdens of life in this world and He offers them His yoke.

Again, there is an irony, a contradiction here. The Jews would have recognized a yoke as a symbol of subjugation, oppression and servitude; something that they had been struggling against for much of their history. A yoke was a wooden crosspiece placed over the shoulders of oxen or other animals to bind them to a plough or a wagon. Also, the Romans (under whose occupation they were living), made a yoke of three spears under which they forced their defeated enemies to march.

But instead of those negative images associated with a yoke, Jesus offered His yoke and told the people that His yoke was easy and His burden was light. Why? Because He would be under the yoke with them, to help them pull the load.

And that is His message to us also. Whenever the trials and tribulations of this life weigh down our hearts and minds and we are mentally and

physically tired, Jesus tells us to come to Him and He will yoke Himself to us and help us carry our burdens.

Jesus is God. He is the King of kings. And yet, He is 'gentle and humble in heart'; always compassionate, always benevolent. He tells us to learn from Him and find rest for our souls.

No one standing erect can lift up a fallen person without bending down and putting out a hand to him/her. Jesus is glorified in heaven. He is a king but He is always willing to stoop down and harness Himself to us to share our load. The question is: Will we let Him?