

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Zechariah 9:9-10

Zechariah was probably born in a priestly family. He is one of the twelve minor prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. He prophesied after the remnant of the Jews had returned from 70 years of exile in Babylon to a city and temple destroyed by the conquerors.⁴

There are four books in the bible that are particularly full of visions: Ezekiel, Daniel, Revelations and Zechariah. They were all written when God's people were governed by hostile forces. When the authorities heard about the visions, they would not know what the prophet was talking about, but the believers would know.³

Thus says the Lord:

9Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! The prophet now speaks directly to Jerusalem (“daughter of Zion”) and her citizens (“daughter of Jerusalem”) as representatives of the entire chosen people. An invitation to rejoice and celebrate is often found in the OT in connection with the arrival of the messianic era. Here it is issued because Jerusalem’s king is arriving. It is implied that he is the descendant of David.¹⁶ Jerusalem and Zion are synonymous for the city was built on two hills and Zion was the name of one of them.² **See, your king shall come to you;** Zechariah was giving them hope for the future with this promise. Christians see this prophecy of the coming Messiah fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Since we await his second coming to establish a kingdom of peace in its fullness, it offers hope to us as well.⁵ **a just “just” means that he does the will of the Father perfectly.¹⁶ savior is he, meek,** This means without the majestic pomp of royalty.⁴ **and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.** The Messiah will come, not as a conquering warrior, but in lowliness and peace. Not like the last kings of Judah, who rode in chariots and on horses, but like the princes of old, the Messiah will ride on an ass.¹⁷ Riding on an ass indicates the peaceful intent of the monarch.⁴ Thus Jesus came as the Prince of Peace, only to be eventually despised and set at naught. When he comes the second time, it will be as the Warrior-King on the white horse of victorious judgment (Rev.19)¹⁸ The Evangelists see a literal fulfillment of this prophecy in the Savior’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem 500 years after this prophecy. Zechariah foretells the character of Jesus more than any other prophet except Isaiah. Here he described Jesus as a servant king rather than a warrior king.¹ The most striking feature of the messianism revealed by Zechariah is the appearance of the Messiah of the poor. With the disappearance of the monarchy for several centuries the external features of the messianic ruler are not the trappings of royalty. He has become identified with the devout class of postexilic Judaism called the poor.²

10He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, Ephraim was the second son of Joseph and in the early historical books, Ephraim appears as a large and powerful tribe, possibly the largest tribe in Israel. Ephraim became a poetic term for the northern kingdom.² **and the horse from Jerusalem;** Jerusalem, as used here, is a designation of the Southern Kingdom.¹⁹ The horse was the mount in time of war.¹⁹ **the warrior’s bow** This was a weapon of war. **shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations.** This will

be a servant king rather than a warrior king.¹ His dominion shall be from sea to sea, This means from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.¹⁷ and from the River Euphrates⁷ to the ends of the earth. God's kingdom will be universal, reuniting not only the northern and southern kingdoms of Palestine, but also the entire civilized world. These are the old boundaries of the united kingdom under Solomon (the son of King David) and are thus considered a reference to the Davidic royalty.⁴

Romans 8:9, 11-13

The book of Romans provides rich reading and the heart of it is in Chapter 8, for the Spirit has been mentioned five times in the first 7 chapters and 29 times in chapter 8.¹⁰ Here we will include the verses that precede our selection as they help us to understand it: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom.8:5-8)

Brothers and sisters:

9You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, After original sin man is pulled in two different directions: either he lets himself be overwhelmed by the disordered passions of the flesh, or he seeks God above all things and contends, with God's grace, AGAINST EVIL. The former lifestyle is "according to the flesh" and the latter is life "in the spirit."⁷ if only The word translated "if only" can also be translated "if, in reality."¹⁹ the Spirit of God dwells in you. This Spirit comes to us in Baptism where we receive a share in the life of Christ. We call it the life of grace.⁹ Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. Attachment to Christ is only possible by the indwelling of the Spirit.¹⁹ Paul interchanges the "Spirit of God," "The Spirit of Christ," and "Christ" in these verses as he tries to express the multifaceted reality of participation in the divine life.⁴ The true follower is Spirit-controlled, Christ-controlled, God focused.¹¹ **11**If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead This power that gives life to the Christian is traced again to its ultimate source in the Father, for the Spirit is the manifestation of his presence and power in the world since the resurrection and through it.⁴ will give life to your mortal bodies also, When God resurrects the bodies of the saints on the Last Day, he will complete the process of divine adoption that began in Baptism with the infusion of the Spirit into our souls.⁶ through his Spirit that dwells in you. St. Polycarp explained it, "He who raised Christ up from the dead will raise us up also if we do His will and walk in His commandments and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness, not rendering blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching."¹⁹ **12**Consequently, brothers and sisters, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. We have an obligation. We are indebted to God to obey His law.¹⁹

¹³For if you live according to the flesh, In 1 John 2:16, life according to the flesh has its source in “carnal allurements or inordinate desire for sensuality, enticements for the eye or avarice (greed), and the life of empty show which includes ostentation, pride, arrogance, and independence of God.”⁸ you will die, We are talking here about spiritual death, about mortal sin, which is not immediately evident. Someone in mortal sin appears no different from others. There is no external sign by which he or she can be recognized. To all outward appearances, the person in mortal sin can do anything that anyone else can do but they can NO LONGER LIVE THE DIVINE LIFE. Supernaturally, the mortal sinner is incapable of the divine life that once was his. He is a spiritual zombie.⁹ but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, Sanctifying grace is the source of life “according to the Spirit.” This influences everything a Christian does: he is constantly trying to bring his thoughts, yearnings, desires and actions into line with what God is asking of him; in everything he does he tries to follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.⁷ you will live. This is referring to *spiritual* life since everyone dies physically regardless of how he lives. The warning is posted for believers who are “in the Spirit” but who can still submit to the flesh. There is a contrast between two mind-sets, one that is fleshly and centered on self and another that is spiritual and focused on God. Paul implies that the believer will not automatically follow the Spirit but must constantly choose which road he wants to follow in light of their destinations.⁶ For these two mind-sets are going in diametrically different directions!

Matthew 11:25-30

²⁵At that time In both the Greek and the Latin, this phrase alerts us to the fact that more than an ordinary historical event is being memorialized here. A mystery of salvation is being proclaimed, for we witness the perfect harmony of mind and heart between the Father and the Son! A modern specialist in this gospel, Pere Lagrange, has called this “Matthew’s most precious pearl.” Jesus is not seeking consolation from man’s hostility to him in the surrounding cities where he had worked most of his miracles but where the people had refused to repent. Rather, he is revealing to man the source of his loving power: his eternal relationship with the Father!!!!!!¹⁵ Jesus exclaimed: What follows is a prayer of praise. It is a typical Jewish prayer except that he addresses God as “Abba” which we translate “Father.” Jesus did not introduce the concept of the fatherhood of God as something entirely new but he did broaden and deepen our understanding.² I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones. While Jesus has just berated several towns that have rejected him, there is a remnant (including the disciples) who trust him with the simplicity of little ones.¹² The wise of this world, that is, those who rely on their own judgment, cannot accept the revelation which Christ has brought us. A supernatural outlook is always connected with humility. A humble person, who gives himself little importance, SEES; a person who is full of self-esteem FAILS to perceive supernatural things.¹³

26 Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. Here Jesus reveals his ongoing act of loving surrender to his Father.¹⁵ Jesus has not reached the wise and prudent; his message has been grasped only by a few disciples who are from the peasant class. Jesus has resigned himself to this because it is God's will. There is a sense in which Jewish wisdom and learning, which was the knowledge of the Law, was a genuine obstacle to the understanding of the message of Jesus. The more one knew about the Law, the more difficult it was to see that the Messianic revolution would supercede the Law.¹⁹

27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son Here Jesus formally reveals his divinity.¹³ The intimacy between the Father and the Son points to their oneness within the Blessed Trinity. Their shared divine knowledge implies a shared divine nature.¹² That is to say, Jesus is God just as the Father is God.¹³ **and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.** Faith is a *gift* of God!¹⁴ Jesus is the exclusive revelation of the Father. This is a direct contradiction of the Jewish claim to have complete revelation of God in the Law and the Prophets.¹⁹

28 Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. St. John of the Cross has an interesting paraphrase of this verse: "All you that go about tormented, afflicted and burdened with the burden of your cares and desires, go forth from them, come to me, and I will refresh you and you shall find for your souls the rest which your desires take from you."¹³ The yoke and burden of Jesus are submission to the reign of God. This imposes no further burden on those who accept it, but rather makes it easier to bear the burdens they already have.¹⁹

29 Take my yoke upon you Our contentment will not result from a condition of carrying no burdens but precisely, from carrying the specific burden that Jesus has destined for our stubborn necks. By offering us his yoke, Jesus is offering us his company.¹⁵ **and learn from me,** This is an education of the heart.¹⁵ The disciple is to be a life-long learner.¹⁹ **for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.** True humility implies having neither a higher nor lower opinion of oneself than one should.²⁰

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." The yoke, which is a sign of submission, that will lighten people's burdens is submission to the Father's will.⁵ The easy yoke consists in a total commitment to godliness through the power of the Holy Spirit. It at once requires both no effort and maximal effort—no effort, in that the necessary moment-to-moment faith can not be worked up from within but is a gift of God, and maximal effort, in that there is no predeterminable level of holiness and obedience sufficient to satisfy God and let us rest on our laurels.²⁰

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken and Marie Finn, (2) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (3) "Plain Talk On the Minor Prophets" by Manford George Gutzke, (4) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (5) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers" by Lawrence E. Mick, (6) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (7) "The Navarre Bible: Romans And Galatians," (8) "St. Joseph Edition of The New American Bible," (9) "Responding To God" by the Dominicans of the Central Province of St. Albert the Great, (10) "The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Romans" by John J. Pilch, (11) "The Letter to The Romans" by William Barclay, (12) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew" With Introduction, Commentary, and

Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (13) "The Navarre Bible: St. Matthew," (14) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (15) "Fire Of Mercy, Heart Of The Word" by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, (16) "The Navarre Bible: Minor Prophets," (17) "Old Testament Reading Guide: The books of Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel" by George Denzer, (18) "Notes on the Minor Prophets" by H.A. Ironside, (19) The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology Online founded by Dr. Scott Hahn, and (20) "Jewish New Testament Commentary" by David H. Stern.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.