

The book of the prophecies of Zechariah is one of the final books of what we call the Old Testament and I presume is there because it is pointing forward to what comes in the New Testament. It is full of promise and expectation for the future of the Hebrew Nation. Looking forward to a time when the humble king will come into Jerusalem riding on a donkey and bringing gentleness peace and doing away with the conflicts between peoples.



Zechariah was being an encouragement to the remnant of the Hebrew nation who had returned from exile in Babylon. They had returned to rebuild the temple the physical symbol of their relationship with God decades after it had been destroyed during their defeat by the Babylonian empire.

Those first few words we heard are full of joy and promise, this comes across even more plainly in the Message translation which says:

"Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion!

Raise your voice, Daughter Jerusalem!

Your king is coming!

a good king who makes all things right,

a humble king riding a donkey,"

This is the prophesy that was in the minds of all of the Gospel writers when they recalled the events of what we call Palm Sunday.



The prophesy is taking a new direction, from promises of victory over enemies and the image of a triumphant King riding on a War Horse, moving away from their rulers swanning of to fight wars. This image of a King riding on a donkey, a down to earth reliable beast, brings to mind someone who is interested in getting on with real life, getting on with the job of ruling with justice and getting things done.

This is part of a new agreement, in biblical terms a covenant, where if the people turn to God and seek justice there is a promise of peace under a new type of reliable ruler, a king but one who is honest and humble.

Most of us are still looking for that ideal ruler.

Today's gospel picks up on this theme of how different is, a new form of leadership is, this Jesus an anointed one.

We find him to be a friend of misfits and down to earth. Not someone who is all pious in public but all about themselves in private.



However Jesus is aware that not everyone is in favour of this new leadership he knows some of the old guard are attempting a smear campaign accusing him of being a glutton and a drunkard because he associates with ordinary folk, implying that he can't be a Godly Spiritual person.

Jesus likes a party, he joins in with celebrations, sitting alongside people, getting to know them, finding out what hurts and worries them so that he can connect with them and lead them forward to a better place.

Again though the promise of a better future involves changing the way people, we, do things. This may not be easy.

A few decades later St Paul is still writing about how Christians engage with a new way of life.

Now most times when I read Paul's writings I have a job to get my head round what he is saying. But what we heard today connects with me straight away. It is like cutting straight into me and exposing my insides.

In summary:-

Each week we come to church and promise to change our lives for the better:

To stop making those cutting comments

To reduce our over-indulgences

To cut out an addiction....

You can fill in the blanks for yourselves...

Then here we are again the following week with the same issues.

Once more I can connect with the way it is put in the Message translation as Paul writes:

21-23 It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

It is sort of reassuring that even St Paul, and many other Saints share the struggles they have with staying on track but it is what makes them saints that they stick at it.

That is all we can do as well.

Stick at it, be encouraged by the Bible and keep that vision of an ever closer relationship with God in our minds as much as we can. **Amen**

ROMANS 7:15
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT I DO.
FOR WHAT I WANT TO DO I do not do,
BUT WHAT I HATE I DO.