

**SERMON:** “*Arise & Shine: Reflected Light.*”

Rev. Geoff Ross Sunday, December 6, 2020, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church.

We don’t talk about Zechariah much – for good reason: as an Old Testament prophet, Zechariah spoke mostly about his visions of judgement/trials/suffering/hardship; evil/disease/darkness: he was tasked with calling out the ugly side of our fallen/sinful human nature. Living in the Persian province of Judah at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century/B.C., Zechariah’s prophecies were filled with faithlessness/punishment – a time in which God was angry with the People of God: his were prophecies of repentance/return. Not really Christmas lectionary reading! But with the beginning of chapter 9, God promises hope/peace!

*[Today/people in darkness:locked-down;again! Feel at dis-ease:chaos/confused/scared – what’s going on?Where’s the hope?/peace? – didn’t God promise us hope?/peace?! Where in the world is the Light?]*

Last Week:OT Prophet/Isaiah whose prophecy pierced the darkness of his day calling out for the People of God to “Arise/Shine/for your Light has come!” – this was the call to hope for “*to the people in darkness/their Light has shined!*” And, even if they didn’t know it then; this was Good News! Hope! This week, Zechariah/another OT Prophet/offers to the People of God/in darkness that Promise-Prophecy of a coming Messiah/King – “*humble and riding on a donkey/on a colt, the foal of a donkey*” who “*shall command peace to the nations;*” “*set your prisoners free*”/ “*will restore you*”/who’s light will enable “*his people*” shine “*like the jewels of a crown/shine on His land – for what goodness and beauty are his!*”

*[Has anyone ever seen jewels in a crown? Not ‘The Crown’/but a jewel-encrusted/crown? Jewels/themselves – have no light/BUT/when light shines on them, the jewels create beautiful colors – red/orange/yellow/blue/green/purple-prism/spectrum of refracted/reflected light!. No light/no colours/reflection/brilliance/beauty: like these jewels/we need light to shine. This is the wonder/joy of this passage.]*

Verse 16 (“*On that day the LORD their God will save them for they are the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.*”) is the promise that God’s grace will make beauty out of the ugliness of this world. as jewels on a crown/shining of the land, we reflect light – the light of Christ – before others so that they may see our good works/give glory to God/no longer walk in darkness but radiate with the light of the Lord! But Zechariah’s prophecy doesn’t end there: the darkness returns. True, Zechariah envisions Christ/King, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey(PalmSunday)/righteous/ushering in salvation:but Zechariah also prophecies what happens next: Jesus’ life sold for 30 pieces of silver(Zec 11:12-13)/ Jesus/shepherd struck down-scatter sheep(Zec 13:7); Zechariah even foresees Jesus’ death on Good Friday – complete with a crown of thorns/darkness of a tomb.

*[Mother:Good deed;say – get a “star in your crown in heaven”/Crowns show up 81 times:Literal-Kings;symbolic-victory; metaphoric-God’s blessing – imperishable/eternal –*

*something to be desired/longed for/strive toward/to want. Asked her:song – “Will there be any stars” “I am thinking today of that beautiful land/I shall reach when the sun goeth down;/When thro' wonderful grace by my Savior I stand,/Will there be any stars in my crown? Will there be any stars, any stars in my crown/When at evening the sun goeth down?/When I wake with the blest in the mansions of rest,/Will there be any stars in my crown?” Stars/also – we’re to be like stars/ “sine like...stars forever”(Dan 12:3) “shine like stars in the world” (Philippians 2:15/reading)]*

In a final prophecy, Zechariah says that God’s plan/purpose for the Messiah/King/Light is to shatter the darkness of this world/death/grave’s door. In a foretelling of the excitement at the empty tomb, Zechariah announces that the “Day”/“fountain” shall spring/arise and “*cleanse [the people]from sin and impurity*” – a fountain of water purifying us/Christ’s cleansing blood takes away our guilt/all that stains/mars us; allowing us to shine.(Promised by angel/Matthew reading) Because Jesus rose from the dead/is alive/the Light of the world – we can experience Christ’s Light/sparkle/shine like jewels in a crown! But, more importantly, Jesus – the promised Light/Emanuel-God-with-us – came to look/be like us so we could come to look/be like Him – so that we might reflect His light in/to the dark world we live in.

*[God/Jesus-no stranger to darkness/our faults/failings:came anyway! Sees our true worth/value:diamonds-in-the-rough/need cleaning/polishing/shining – wants the best for us. ‘Stars’/planets in darkness/what we see is reflected light-that’s what God sees in us.]*

How do we know this? Remember that day Zechariah spoke of that would come – it came/was Christmas! And, because of this/the Child of Bethlehem was born for you/me/us to live/die – cleanse us from guilt/shame/sin – by God’s grace/through faith, we’ve/you’ve/I’ve been saved/made bright/shiny/beautiful – like stars/jewels, so, ‘arise/shine’ like stars in the reflected light of Christ’s promised/predicted presence. Amen.