

THE ROAD TO PEACE

PALM SUNDAY: ZECHARIAH 9

INTRODUCTION – WORLD PEACE?

- Ukraine situation – extreme example of injustice that’s everywhere from scamming OAPs to police shooting an innocent black teenager on his cousin’s couch.
- Two huge obstacles

OBSTACLE 1: POWERLESSNESS TO SAVE OTHERS

- The only way to overcome these injustices seems to be intervention by a stronger power
- But when it’s the world’s largest country, and they have nuclear weapons, that’s hard
- And these interventions tend to come at a cost:
 - Pax Romana – famously brutal – e.g. siege of Carthage 350000 civilians dead
 - British Empire – Amritsar massacre, horrors of transatlantic slave trade
 - Afghanistan & Iraq – lasting legacy of insurgency and violence
- Part of me longs for the rise of a superpower that could send Putin packing, plus end Uyghur genocide, lift N. Korean oppression – but I know it would itself become tyrannical.

OBSTACLE 2: RIGHT MORAL FRAMEWORK

- This mistrust leads to the second obstacle – can a great power be trusted?
- Security council: UK & China don’t want to challenge Russia because it might threaten their standing.
- When is it right to intervene?
 - Ukraine seems clear-cut
 - But NATO / Balkans?
 - Argentina / Falklands?
- Some cases are clearer than others, but we lack an objective moral framework and we have reason to distrust each other’s motives when making decisions.
 - This is perhaps the main reason why even collaborative efforts like the UN, while helpful, can’t achieve world peace.

SO – WORLD PEACE?

- So, for world peace, we need:
 - The intervention of a power great enough to overcome oppressors and rescue the weak
 - For that power to be entirely, objectively, moral and upright
- These are familiar themes to those who are familiar with the Bible – power to save = “salvation” and objective, moral uprightness = “righteousness”

PALM SUNDAY

- Palm Sunday celebrates the “triumphal entry
- The Jews were desperate for a rescuing power – hence welcome of Jesus as “liberator”
- Jesus doesn’t intend to fulfil this dream – as we can see from his actions:
 - Firstly, he asks for a donkey colt, not a horse.
 - Secondly, he doesn’t head for the government building, but heads for the temple where he clears it of opportunists and heals the blind and the lame.
- If Jesus really is coming as king, he’s clearly a **different sort of king**. Let’s look at each of these.

THE DONKEY

- Two of four eyewitnesses connect the donkey with a prophecy from 500 years before.

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

*See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation,
lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

*I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem,
and the battle-bow will be broken.*

He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

- This king wasn't coming to wage war, but to end war. He's gentle (hence blind & lame).
- He's also described as "righteous" (so you can trust him) and "having salvation" (so he is able to rescue)

THE TEMPLE

- So how do you end war and bring peace, without swords and guns?
- Jesus didn't attack the seat of government, storm the Bastille or the Winter Palace, or take over state radio.
 - He went to the temple, and cleaned it out
 - His victory wasn't over Romans or Pharisees, but over the sin that's in all of our hearts – and over its consequence, death

YOU HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID...

- Jesus taught on this, earlier in his ministry. He pointed out that the "big problems" that we all like to condemn are the product of the fundamental problem in our hearts
 - Do not murder – angry at brother
 - Do not commit adultery – looking lustfully at another woman = committing adultery in heart
- Essentially, the world is the way it is not ***in spite of the good intentions of people like us*** but ***because of the sin that lives in all of our hearts.***

VICTORY OVER SIN

- The message of Easter is that Jesus came to conquer and drive out that sin.
- That's the testimony of people who've chosen to follow Jesus over the last two thousand years – and there's been somewhere between 2 and 3 billion of them
 - Not that they no longer do anything wrong, but that sin is beaten
- A bit like being in France after D-Day – there were still battles, but the outcome was certain.

THE ROAD TO PEACE

- The road is one of surrendering our lives to the only King who is
 - strong enough to come humbly
 - powerful enough to rescue people from sin
 - totally trustworthy and morally pure
- Around the world, those who Jesus has changed, those who call him Lord (not those who use his name for their own ends) are the most active in bringing peace and justice, and also the most persecuted by a country mile.
- But our hope is certain – Jesus has founded a kingdom of peace, and one day it will stretch over the whole earth, with all wrongs put right and an end to war and suffering.
- Do you want in?