

Sunday 5 July 2020
Fourth Sunday after Trinity

First Reading Zechariah 9:9-12

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

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

¹⁰ 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^[b] to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

¹² Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;
even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

Gospel Matthew 11:16-19. 25-end

¹⁶ ‘To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others:

¹⁷ ‘‘We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.’’

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘‘He has a demon.’’ ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.’

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. ²⁷ ‘All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’

Reflection

Both Jesus and John the Baptist before him faced those who refused to heed their messages. Whether it was John bringing the sober message of repentance, or Jesus himself bringing the joyful news of God's mercy, neither could get it right in the eyes of their critics.

Such encounters tell us as much about their audience as about the message – people who resist listening and learning anything new from God. They already know it all. Chief among them are the religious experts, well versed in theology and doctrine, who see themselves as equipped to exercise power over others' lives in matters of religious observance and judgement.

But Jesus proclaims the truth that as God's Son his knowledge of God is unique and from the inside. Human beings struggle to attain this knowledge themselves, but it is revealed by Jesus, with the authority that God has given him.

Those who can grasp such knowledge of God are not the religious experts, but those who know themselves to be as powerless as tiny children. These people are most open to encountering God afresh, as Jesus offers not a headful of theological information and instruction but a direct personal relationship with the divine. Such people have no illusions of grandeur. Indeed, they can sometimes become overwhelmed by daily living as they try to meet the expectations placed upon them by the demands of meeting the 'new normal' or the other challenges we currently face. It is to such as these that Jesus gives a particularly tender welcome, people like us, people like you. He invites us to come close, be willing to learn and follow him. The outcome will be souls set free to move more lightly by the power and love of his accompanying presence. It is not God's nature to crush his creation by imposing unreachable expectations. It is only human beings who do that.

Whoever and wherever we are, Jesus invites us to place ourselves humbly under his care, to let go of all we carry, from our own capabilities to the burdens that others have placed on us. All Jesus asks of us is that we simply join him and surrender to his lead. He promises to be alongside us and keep us on track step by step at a gentle, sustainable pace.

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Rev Jenny Ellis

Collect

Gracious Father, by the obedience of Jesus
you brought salvation to our wayward world:
draw us into harmony with your will,
that we may find all things restored in him,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen