

## Liturgy of the Word 14 OT Year A

### **Celebration Summary: Bryan M. Cones**

Today's first reading evokes Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, recalled each year on Palm Sunday. Yet while we acclaim Jesus king, the words of the prophet Zechariah immediately remind us that this ruler is not what we might expect. Israel's "just savior" is "meek, and riding on an ass." Rather than bring great victory through war, this king "shall banish the chariot . . . the horse . . . the warrior's bow" (first reading). Peace shall be his standard.

This ruler does have an enemy, however: the sin that has ensnared the world. It is through Christ's obedience in suffering (second reading)—not through force of arms—that we have been raised in the Spirit. We in turn must live according to that Spirit, putting to the death the "deeds of the body": violence, war, hatred, and all that diminishes humanity. These are but "empty promises of passing joy," and so we pray that sin may never gain a hold over us (alternative opening prayer).

It may be jarring to hear of a peaceful king when surrounded by war on every side, violence often justified by all sides in the name of God. Against this logic of the flesh, the liturgy offers a logic of Spirit, a vision of a meek and humble ruler, whose "yoke is easy," whose "burden is light" (Gospel).

This king will relieve those who labor and are weary, and so we cry out—in song, prayer, and preaching—for the day when we will "rejoice heartily" in the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

### **Lectionary Summary: Glenn CJ Byer**

Humble, servant leadership is the over all theme present

in both the first reading and the Gospel.

In the selection from Zechariah, which scholars date as composed after the Babylonian exile, the prophet speaks of a "messianic" king who will come as a servant ruler. Weapons of war will be banished in lieu of a universal reign of peace. To the shattered community returning to Jerusalem following the exile, his words may have been a sharp contrast to the kind of "messiah" the people expected who would establish a new kingdom with sword and violence.

It is obvious that Matthew, the evangelist, knew of this prophetic writing in his depiction of Jesus, who comes "meek and humble of heart." "Meek and humble of heart," Jesus is presented by the evangelist as a servant leader who helps his followers to carry the burdens of discipleship. Jesus is presented not as dispensing with the law and the prophets but as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. The disciple is called to learn from him. For the Jewish people, the law was sometimes referred to as a "yoke" and Jesus' use of that term certainly won a hearing with the disciples.

In the eighth chapter of Romans, Paul is reflecting on the difference between a person guided by the Spirit and one who is "in the flesh". If a person does not have the Spirit of Christ, he or she is living in the flesh and will not participate in the divine life given in baptism. If the person is living in the Spirit, sin and death is conquered and the person will have (eternal) life in communion with God.

**Celebrations Summary by Dale J. Sieverding:** Humble, servant leadership is the over all theme present in both the first reading and the Gospel.

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### **First Reading Zechariah 9:9-10**

*See, your king comes to you humbly.*

### **A reading from the Book of the Prophet Zechariah**

Thus says the LORD:

Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion,  
shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king shall come to you;  
a just savior is he,  
meek, and riding on an ass,  
on a colt, the foal of an ass.  
He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim,  
and the horse from Jerusalem;  
the warrior's bow shall be banished,  
and he shall proclaim peace to the nations.  
His dominion shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

### **The word of the Lord**

#### **Zechariah 9:9-10 Commentary by Deacon Owen Cummings:**

The Book of Zechariah, a favorite book of the New Testament authors, provides our first reading today. It probably takes its origins in the late sixth century BCE, when the Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt after the exile in Babylon. This was also a time when messianic dreams were being pushed into some glorious future that God would bring about — a post-exilic, discouraged people required reassurance that God's promises to them would be fulfilled. "Messiah" means in Hebrew "anointed," and the people had come through the vicissitudes of history to realize that their messiahs or kings lacked messianic luster. They looked to the future, and Zechariah in this passage provides the much needed reassurance. The Messiah will surely come, but not as a warrior and on a warrior's battle horse. Rather, he will ride on an ass — useless in battle, and so a sign of peace. Chariot and horse, premier instruments of war, will be banished from the holy city of Jerusalem, as will the warrior's bow. This coming Messiah, riding the symbol of peace, will proclaim that peace to all, "from sea to sea." The gospel reading sees him as Jesus, "gentle and humble of heart."

## **Responsorial Psalm Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14**

✠(cf. 1) I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Or:

✠Alleluia.

I will extol you, O my God and King,  
and I will bless your name forever and ever.  
Every day will I bless you,  
and I will praise your name forever and ever.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and of great kindness.  
The LORD is good to all  
and compassionate toward all his works.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,  
and let your faithful ones bless you;  
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom  
and speak of your might.

The LORD is faithful in all his words  
and holy in all his works.  
The LORD lifts up all who are falling  
and raises up all who are bowed down.

**Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14 Commentary by John Paul Heil:**

Main Theme: The Lord God offers MERCY to all. We are invited to join the psalmist in blessing and praising the "name" of God forever and ever. The "name" of God is not just the word by which God is identified or called, but represents the power or essence of God as revealed and

experienced by God's creatures. The "name" of the Lord God, then, is that He "is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness." God's compassion extends to all creatures. This accords with today's first reading, which addresses this "name" of God as follows: "But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook people's sins that they may repent." And in today's Gospel reading it is Jesus who inspires the rich tax collector Zacchaeus to repent and experience this mercy, this "name" of God.

Such mercy prompts the psalmist to encourage all of us to bless and thank God. The psalmist prays that we, as God's faithful ones, may make this great mercy known--"Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might." It is when we repent of our sinfulness and accept God's gracious mercy that we experience how "the Lord lifts up all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down." Let us praise God's "name"--His gracious mercy and kind compassionate toward all.

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## **Second Reading** Romans 8:9, 11-13

*If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

## **A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans**

Brothers and sisters:

You are not in the flesh;

on the contrary, you are in the spirit,  
if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead

dwells in you,  
the one who raised Christ from the dead  
will give life to your mortal bodies also,  
through his Spirit that dwells in you.  
Consequently, brothers and sisters,  
we are not debtors to the flesh,  
to live according to the flesh.  
For if you live according to the flesh, you will die,  
but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,  
you will live.

## **The word of the Lord**

### **Romans 8:9, 11-13 Commentary by John Paul Heil:**

Main Theme: Living by the Spirit rather than the flesh gives us the hope for eternal life.

Within the apocalyptic dualism of "flesh" opposed to "Spirit" we Christians can now live under the realm established for us by the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells directly and deeply within us Christians who belong to Christ by our baptism into his death and resurrection. In belonging to Christ we are situated within a whole new sphere of power and influence. Since Christ now subsists within our very persons, the intense apocalyptic battle, in which each of us experiences the push and pull of the contradictory forces of good evil within us, is able to be overcome.

Since the Spirit of the God who has already raised Jesus Christ from the dead now dwells deep within us, Paul sparks our spirits with the assured hope that with this very same life-giving power this very same God "will give life" also to our still mortal persons through his Spirit which dwells within us. Paul insists that we Christians are not only spiritually alive now but will also surely attain future life with God as well.

Paul insists that our moral lives can and must now correspond to our Christian hope. He alerts us not to continue to live under the perverse influence of our sinful human "flesh," otherwise we are doomed to the inescapable, annihilating finality of death. But if by God's Spirit we avoid sinfulness and "put to death" our sinful conduct, Paul guarantees us of the certain hope that thereby "you will live!"

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### **Gospel Acclamation** cf. Matthew 11:25

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;  
you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

### **Gospel** Matthew 11:25-30

#### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**

At that time Jesus exclaimed:

"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.

Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.

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  
and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,  
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,

for I am meek and humble of heart;  
and you will find rest for yourselves.  
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

## **The Gospel of the Lord**

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