

Deep Hope

Zechariah 9:9-17

Harder than we thought

Sometimes a journey turns out to be harder than we thought it would be
Life can be harder than expected. And following Jesus can be harder than expected
Pray: strengthen us for the journey, and give us deep hope

Matthew 21

Jesus entered Jerusalem with joy!

Humbly, on a donkey

The people shouted with joy, praising God

Matthew quoted Zechariah 9:9: "Say to Daughter Zion,

'See, your king comes to you,

gentle and riding on a donkey,

and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

Then something went terribly wrong and Jesus died a horrible death 5 days later

Zechariah

Zechariah: After a joyous beginning, the journey turned out to be harder than expected

God's people had been conquered because of their sin

Temple was destroyed

Joy when they were allowed to return to their land

Joy when the temple's foundation was completed

But also weeping by those who knew what the temple had been

But then, year after year went by with little progress

Almost 20 years later, God sent Zechariah to them...

Countries around threatened and troubled them

Financial hardship

Conflicts and injustice among people in Judah

Slow progress on rebuilding the temple: Trying seemed pointless

"It was a time of disappointment, disillusionment, despondency, and guilt."

Then God sent Zechariah to the people with a message...

A call to spiritual revival

Therefore tell the people: This is what the Lord Almighty says: '**Return to me,**' declares the Lord Almighty, '**and I will return to you,**' says the Lord Almighty. *Zechariah 1:3*

'Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and animals in it. And **I myself will be a wall of fire around it,**' declares the Lord, '**and I will be its glory within.**' *Zechariah 2:4-5*

Zechariah 9:9-17

But also: Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:7b

The Big Idea

God's final and joyous victory for His people comes after an often challenging path of faith just as it did for Jesus and that was always God's plan

When the Light of the World entered the world...

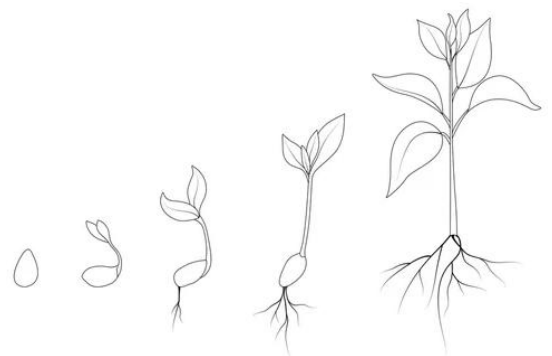
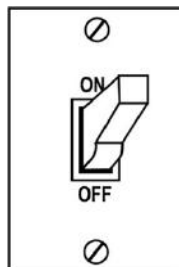
Was it more like a light switch or planting a seed?

Was it more like a light switch or working yeast into dough?

Was it more like a light switch or a kernel of wheat that dies and is buried?

The Son of God's life led up to:

being crucified as a criminal in shame, and being abandoned (or worse) by his followers so only 120 people remained with him



Yet when John saw Jesus in His glory, John fell at Jesus' feet as though dead because of Jesus' overwhelming glory!
And now, "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord"

Application

Keep a deep hope in God

The Bible doesn't teach a simplistic optimism
Jesus said: In this life, we'll have trouble
And the hardest times might still be in front of us!
But...

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."
Romans 8:18

"In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." *1 Peter 1:6-7*

"Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." *1 Peter 1:13*

"We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." *Romans 8:23-25*

Do the work God calls us to do, a work that fits the hope

Keep seeking first His Kingdom

Love God with all we are

Love our neighbors as ourselves

Be a witness to the Gospel/Good News of Jesus Christ!

Because...

It is the path to "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade... kept in heaven for you...shielded by God's power"
1 Peter 1

Jesus is with us on that road, the Good Shepherd, the Redeemer, who will come back so we will live with Him forever

Run with perseverance

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. *Hebrews 12:1b-3*

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. Where has the journey of life, and of following Jesus, turned out to be harder than you expected?
2. What is the hope that Christians have of the glory to be revealed? For example, consider 1 Peter 1:3-5 and Romans 8:18 and following. In what sense is this a deep hope rather than a simplistic optimism?
3. What helps you "set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming"? (see 1 Peter 1:13)?
4. What is the good work that God is calling you to do, a work that requires courage and perseverance? In what ways does this work bring inexpressible and glorious joy, even today? (see 1 Peter 1:8-9)