

Zechariah 2:10-13

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[0 : 00] And I want you to turn to Zechariah 2. Zechariah 2 which is on page 794. If you've not got a church Bible, do go and grab one. It's page 794. And I want to speak to you from a really famous verse in verse 10 and 11.

I think these couple of verses in Zechariah 2 have got truths which go right to the heart of what Christmas is about. The heart of the Christian faith itself. And so here's my first point. I'll get straight into it. Page 794. Zechariah 2 verse 10 and 11. So the first point is this. God's coming.

Look at the first line. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold I come. I come. And I will dwell in your midst, declares the Lord.

And so this promise that you've got there is a shaft of light into the heart of God. It's a shaft of light into what his promise is and his intentions are.

[1 : 08] Can you see what his intention is? He says I'm going to come. And I'm going to dwell in the midst of you. At the heart of the Christian faith is the God who is coming towards us.

It's the God who wishes to dwell with his people. And live with us. And be with us. And I think that's really important that we recognise that. It's really important that we recognise this isn't something that you and I can manage.

It's not something that we can organise. It's not something that we can influence or arrange. We cannot control it. And happily we can't mess it up either.

But God's declaration here is his determination and his promise that I will come to you. And I will dwell with you. And if it's going to happen it's God that's going to do it.

And it's a promise of incredible richness. It's spoken into a situation which is devastating beyond human repair. When Zechariah spoke this prophecy it's about 500 years before the Lord Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem.

[2 : 14] And the city of Jerusalem God's city was in ruins. The houses and the walls have been demolished. The temple has been razed to the ground. And it's in this gloom that the word of the Lord comes to Zechariah.

And it's in this gloom that hope comes to the people of God. That I will come and dwell with you. And so we saw this morning didn't we that the two sermons are tied. That that has been a great problem for us.

That when God created you and I and when he created humanity he created it for friendship. And for fellowship. And for communion with one another yes. But also with him.

We've been created as social beings to know God. And to know one another. And so when in the garden you remember we declared independence from God.

And we said we're not going to obey you. We're going to obey the voice of the serpent. And we are going to play God. Do you remember immediately there was a separation. There was a rupture in their relationship with God and with each other.

[3 : 21] And yet we saw this morning didn't we that God is the one who comes looking. He comes looking for them in the cool of the day. And he says where are you. God is the one seeking. And Adam and Eve are the ones hiding.

And God says what have you done. They point the finger at each other. And they do what we all do when we're found out. We blame the other person.

Because sin changes everything. And sin instead of harmony. Instead of mutual kindness and love. There is guilt and blame and shame.

And what we see in Genesis 3. That means that the presence of God. Is no longer a source of joy and life and hope. So do you remember when God came looking for Adam and Eve.

What did they do? They hid. And the presence of God now becomes a source of hiding. And a fear. And so it's like light isn't it?

[4 : 19] When light shines on us. We either love it or hate it. Depending on what we're doing. And since the Garden of Eden. God comes to us. And dwells with us.

And that poses a terrible problem. God hasn't changed. But we have. So we can no longer look God in the face. And say I'm an innocent person.

And I have no sin. And so every time in the Bible. When God appears in a vision to someone. When God appears in a vision to someone. The instant reaction of the human is terror.

So do you remember when Isaiah. Isaiah went to church in Isaiah 6. And he saw the vision of the Lord. And it rattled him. Literally he said I'm unraveled.

I'm ruined. And yet the remarkable thing is that God doesn't give up. And the story of the Bible from Genesis 3 to the end of Revelation.

[5 : 20] Is how is God going to come and dwell with his people. To give us what we cannot achieve by ourselves. So verse 10.

Sing and rejoice. O daughter of Zion. For behold I come. And I will dwell. In your midst declares the Lord. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day.

And shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. It's a wonderful promise. And it's a promise out of his sheer mercy.

And out of his sheer grace. You see God is committed to his people. We cannot understand that. We cannot understand why he loves us. He loves us not because we deserve it. It's not that he

looks at you tonight. And says you would make a magnificent prospect.

[6 : 22] You are a promising candidate. He doesn't love us because of what he gets out of it. He loves us because of who he is. He has an ad on the radio for a phone deal.

You know the phone deal kind of things. And at the end of the commercial. It said this. More minutes. More coverage. More love. More minutes. More coverage. More love. So I signed up immediately.

But it's not that kind of love. It's not the kind of love where we sign a contract. And we get something in return. No. God has made us for himself. And you are more precious to God.

And I am more precious to God than we can ever imagine. And not because there's something in us. But because of who he is.

And so again and again. In the Bible. God reveals his love in the Bible. When we put the spectacles of the Bible on. We understand something of God's love for us. He gives us analogies.

[7 : 26] He gives us analogies. But they fail to express the full wonder of his love. In the very sentence before this. Can you see? Zechariah.

God touches on it. He says, doesn't he? God reveals his love. And he speaks of a parent. In the Bible.

God gives the analogy of a parent to a child. Or a husband with a wife. But all the analogies fail to express the wonders of his love. He speaks in Zechariah 2.

About his people being the apple of his eye. Eyes are really sensitive things, aren't they? God is saying to his people.

I feel tenderly about you. When my people are hurt. It is like someone poking me in the eye. And that is why this coming that is promised in Zechariah.

[8 : 22] Is going to be different. Look at the last line of chapter 2. Just for a moment. Be silent. All flesh. Before the Lord.

For he has roused himself from his holy dwelling. Can you see that picture? God has got up from where he dwells. And he's going to move to a different place.

He's going to come in a completely different way. It is of course, isn't it? The promise of the birth of Jesus. Because in the manger 2,000 years ago. When Jesus was born.

God became flesh. God took on flesh. And dwelt amongst us. It's the most human of events. And yet God was fulfilling that promise to Zechariah.

500 years before. The man Christ Jesus. The baby Christ Jesus. The one in whom all the fullness of God dwells bodily. The man Jesus Christ. With. Who has all the perfection.

[9 : 27] And all the beauty. And all the love of God the Father. In Jesus. God the Lord has come to dwell. Among us.

And so that's why if you read John's gospel. If you read the gospels. You will hear Jesus saying. He is one with the Father. That he is our maker.

And our judge. That he stands. Before our lives. And after our lives. And that no one can honour God. Or worship God. Unless they honour him.

And worship him. He tells us that he has the keys. Of death and hell. And that if we trust in him. He will give us the gift of eternal life. And if you watch Jesus.

You'll see him walking on water. You'll see him healing the sick. Calming the storm. And raising the dead. And if you listen to him. You'll hear him saying. I'm the water of life. I'm the bread of life.

[10:22] I'm the light of the world. I'm the word of God. I am the very stuff. I'm the source of life itself. Because he's God come to dwell among us.

And that's the first truth. This passage teaches us. God. God's coming. But there's a second truth. And it's our response. And I just want you to see.

Two urgent responses. That God demands of us tonight. And the first is in that first line. Isn't it? In verse 10. It is sing and rejoice.

And God says that. Is a command. Sing and rejoice. For behold I come. You see.

It's very important. For the people of God. For you and me. To sing. And to enter into the joy. Of God's coming. In Jesus Christ.

[11:21] There's no use. Really being a spectator. There are some ministers out there. That tell their congregation. Sometimes they stop hymns. And they say. You need to sing.

Better. I think that's biblical. All right. And far. Far be it from me. To tell you. That you need to sing. And rejoice.

A little bit more. But God clearly thinks. You should. Doesn't he? Sing and rejoice. For behold I come. And in the birth of Jesus Christ.

In Bethlehem. God offers the one thing. That you need above everything else. And it is friendship with him. It is the forgiveness of our sin.

It is the promise of life to come. We live in a city. Don't we? Which is just. I think. Incredibly lonely.

[12:20] It is. It is why I think. That hospitality. Is such an important part. Of church life. Particularly in London. That our homes are open. Because in some ways. That is the best apologetic.

That shows the gospel. More than. More than. More than me. Giving talks. Every day. Because we live in a lonely city. And we have.

This great truth. Of friendship with God. And forgiveness of our sins. And the restoration of fellowship. With one another. And that should cause us to rejoice.

So I don't know whether you have thought about it. But God entering our world. As a human baby. Is a stunning act. Of condescension. Of humility. One of the most expensive yachts.

Has ever been built. It's bigger than the Royal Britannia. It was built. By a man from Dubai. It cost 300 million dollars. It's owned by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

[13:23] It's the crown prince of Dubai. The yacht is so big. It's got its own submarine. And this is what the builder. Of that yacht said. He said.

Entertaining guests on your yacht. Is much more special. Than just bringing them to your villa. Rich people. Can go to a beautiful hotel. And pay four or five thousand dollars.

Per night. For a suite. The problem is. When you go down the elevator. The lift. You are in the lobby. With people. Who are paid 20 times less. Than you are.

And my clients don't like that. I think there's lovely honesty in that crowd. Isn't there? Who is speaking here.

In Zechariah. It's not the crown prince of Dubai. It is God himself. That he is the creator.

[14:19] And the owner of all things. He is not inviting you. For a weekend. To his villa. He is not dropping down. In the lift. And holding his nose. For a brief visit.

In the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to dwell with us. God does not stand at a distance tonight. He came to be one of us. And to seek us out. And Jesus said.

He came to serve. And to give his life. As a ransom for many. And that's why our carols. Are so full of joy. Aren't they? Joyful all ye nations rise.

Join the triumph. Of the skies. With the angelic host. Proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem. O come all ye faithful. Joyful and triumphant.

Sing. Choirs of angels. Sing in exaltation. Sing all ye citizens of heaven above. Come on ye citizens of heaven. O come let us adore him. And so I don't know fully.

[15:19] What you've experienced. In the last 12 months. Maybe prosperity. It might be loss. It might be grief. It might be suffering. Maybe it's unknown. To anyone else here tonight. I certainly don't know.

What the next 12 months hold for you. But this I can say. That in Jesus Christ. God has come for sinners. And in his life. And his death.

And his resurrection. He has opened the gate of heaven. And he offers you a living hope. And he offers you the prospect. Of friendship. And fellowship.

With him. And with his people. Forever. Forever. So the first response. To God's coming. Is that we sing and rejoice. But the second response.

In verse 13. Verse 13. First response. Sing and rejoice. Second response. Be silent. All flesh.

[16:13] Before the Lord. For he's roused himself. From his holy dwelling. Now what's the obvious question? What's the really obvious question?

The obvious question is. How. Can we be silent. If we're supposed to sing. And rejoice. And the answer is. That they are both actions.

And they are both attitudes. And so when God says here. Be silent. He is speaking about.

Obedience. And submission. And. Because the baby born in Bethlehem.

Is God the Lord. God the Lord. Who made. The sea. And the sky. The one to whom. We will all give an account. Be silent. All flesh.

Because we are all flesh. Here it is not horror. 9-11. Do you remember 9-11.

[17:12] When those planes were driven into the. The twin towers. And Tiger Woods. At that point. Was the kind of greatest golfer in the world. And. He was playing a round of golf.

And he goes to the site. And they show him. He is watching. I think. While the second. Plane goes into the tower. And there's. There's a photograph. Of Tiger Woods. And he is looking at it.

With eyes wide open. And his hand is over his mouth. His hand is over his mouth. That sometimes happens. With horrors. That we put our hands. Over our mouth. But here.

At the end of Zechariah 2. It is not in horror. It is something. That is so good. Isn't it? It is something. That is so good. And we know.

That actually. When something so good happens. When. When we are on the receiving end. Of unspeakable generosity. When somebody does something. Which is. So kind. Or someone asks of us.

[18:07] What we'd always be dreaming. Dreaming of them asking us. We put our hands over our mouths. We can't believe it. So good. So gracious. So full of beauty. So full of wonder. Beyond our imagination.

That we put our hands. Over our mouths. And so just as we think. Of what it meant. When God says. Behold. I come. And I will dwell.

In your midst. That what it cost. The Lord Jesus Christ. To come. To get off the throne. As the king of the angels. And become a little lower. Than the angels. For the creator.

To enter into creation. For the law giver. To live under the law. To leave the eternal security. Of heaven.

And be born. A vulnerable baby. To leave a life. Of adoration. For a life. Of rejection. And suffering.

[19:02] To choose a people. For your glory. And then come to those people. And be rejected. By those he came for. To be flogged.

And to be crucified. It was for us he came. It was for us he lived. For us he died. And for us he rose again.

And we ought to be silent before him. And we ought to stop our mouths long enough. That we can hear his word. To stop our arrogance.

And to receive what he says. And surrender to him. I was listening to the radio this week. And one of the commentators was on there.

And he said in passing. Jesus is alright by me. Jesus is alright by me. And I'm sure Jesus was absolutely thrilled to pieces to hear that.

[20:05] It would be much better wouldn't it. For him. To be silent. For Jesus Christ is Emmanuel. He is God with us. And so bow before him.

And sing and rejoice. I want to finish with this. I want you to come with me. To the last two verses in the Bible. To Revelation 22.

Really verse 20. And Jesus says. In Revelation 22. In verse 20. Right at the end of the Bible. On page 1042.

He says. I am coming soon. I am coming soon. And the writer says.

Doesn't he. Amen. Let it be. Come Lord Jesus. And in those verses there. The Lord Jesus is not speaking about his first coming. He's speaking about his second coming.

[21 : 11] And when Jesus comes again. He will come. Not in weakness. He will come. Not as a baby boy. But in power and majesty. With all his holy angels.

And his coming will not be confined. To a little place. In the back of beyond. In the Middle East. It won't be one place. It will be worldwide.

And it will be universal. And it will be instantaneous. And it will be glorious. And it will be inescapable. And so tonight. We are really. Very very fortunate. Because we live between the two comings.

Of Jesus Christ. And we can look back. And we can see that the son of God. Entered into our world. Dying for our sin. Rising from the dead. For our justification.

We look back. And we can hear. His words. That he has gone into heaven. And he is going to return from heaven. As judge of the living and the dead. And he has told us.

[22 : 10] That when he comes. He will make a new heaven. And a new earth. And he will take those who belong. To him. To be with him forever. And the dwelling place of God.

Will be with man. And so if Zechariah's hearers. Had reason to be silent. We have far more. And if Zechariah's hearers.

Had reason to sing and rejoice. We have far more. So let's sing. Let's sing.