

Title: Who ya gonna call?
Text: Zechariah 10.1-12
Theme: Only God can save.
Series: Zechariah #11
Prop Stmtnt: We are tempted to trust in anything other than god in order to retain a measure of independence.

Read Text:

Let's say that you are a pediatric oncologist and you have developed an effective treatment plan for Neuroblastoma. In fact, you have developed the only treatment plan for Neuroblastoma, and every child you have ever treated has been cured from that terrible form of cancer. Your record is 100% successful. Parents bring their children to you from all over the world and the halls of your practice are lined with the pictures of grateful children and their family with letters of appreciation. When a family comes into your practice, they are met with receptionists, nurses and other medical professionals who are genuinely happy because they know that this family that has received this devastating news now has hope. This disease has a cure and the cure is foolproof.

One day a family comes in and you review the diagnosis their child has received. You explain your treatment plan and point to the research, the studies and the journal articles that support your claim of 100% success. You know that this child now has hope, but you also know that your plan is this child's only hope. After you have answered all their questions, you ask them if they want to proceed. The answer to you is obvious. But, they hesitate. And then, they insinuate that you are arrogant since you claim that your plan is the only one that works. After all, there are other pediatric oncologists out there, plus homeopathic medicines options. Who are you to say that your way is the only way?

You are stunned. What just happened? Sure, it hurts to be accused of things like that, but beyond that is the fact that here is a child who is going to die, unless this child is treated properly and these parents are unwilling to accept the facts. They leave the office. Your staff asks, "what happened?" There is no good answer. Why would you not listen to the only one who can help you?

That is a consistent question the prophets ask. Jeremiah and Isaiah in particular are at a complete loss as to why people would trust in idols that cannot speak, cannot move, and gods who have no authority. Why would you entrust your happiness and security to anything that cannot keep it safe? But, what makes Zechariah's prophecy so urgent is the fact that God warned Israel and Judah for hundreds of years that they were going to be punished for their disobedience. They kept ignoring God. And then, like the flood of Noah, the end came. For Israel, the Assyrians wiped them out. For Judah, Babylon devastated their land and took most of them into exile. Now, 70 years later, they are back in the land and some of the people, particularly some of the leaders are practicing idolatry, again. When life doesn't give you what you want, who (or what) do you turn to? What do you rely on? What is the picture in your mind of you, having "made it?" And what are you willing to do in order to make that happen?

For the Jews, Zechariah is asking, “What are you thinking?” Didn’t we go through this before? How did that work out? We lost about everything. Why repeat the same sins? Does it make any sense?

Some of you know this personally because it describes you or someone close to you. You bow down and pray to the bottle, or heroin, or porn, or the casinos, or anger, or appearance, or success, or control. Again, what do you tend to rely on, when you are under pressure? What is your default response? Anything other than God is an idol. You trust in that idol to comfort you, give you courage, help you sleep at night, and relax you. It promises you all of those things, but it is a liar and cannot give you what it promises. In fact, instead of giving to you, it robs you. It takes your worship, and then demands your worship. It takes your money. It will take your job, your family, your will, your liver, your mind, your desires, your relationships, your home, and your life. Logically, one would think, after you lose your marriage, or lose your license, or lose your job that you will finally see the truth about it. When no one wants you around, you will finally see what you have done, right? Not necessarily. Sin does not work that way. Every idol is appealing in the moment. Every idol over promises on what it can deliver, and hides the real cost, but in the end, it cannot save. It can only destroy. This text is for you.

1. **Only God can save you.** (1-2)

Zechariah is only echoing God’s command. If you need rain, do not go to an idol. Ask rain from the LORD. As I explained last week, rain was a matter of life and death. Who you trusted for rain was a marker that gave evidence of who you trusted for your life. But beyond that, asking anyone other than God for rain was absurd. God made the rain. God controls the weather. God makes the storm clouds. If you need rain, go to the one who causes it and controls it. The point is clear. Only God can save.

Since God is the only one who can save, why would you not ask him? We do not ask God because we do not want to be dependent upon him. We do not want to have to trust in him. We would rather trust in idols than God, because trusting in idols is a form of trusting in ourselves. When you are under pressure, where do turn for help? What generates the most amount of anxiety in your life, and what does that reveal about your ultimate desires?

But our creator God is not simply one option out of many. God is your only choice. Sometimes, God in his grace puts you into a position where you have nowhere else to turn. But, don’t turn to God in disgust because he “beat” you. God does not give you no other choice in order to win, he gives you no other choice because he knows that no one else can save you and no one else loves you like he does.

v.2, the gods make no sense. The diviners see lies. They have to make stuff up because the gods do not talk. They claim to speak for the god (for a fee), but since the gods cannot communicate, they have to pretend to say things in order to get you to give them your

respect and money. In the end, after you have given away everything that you have, you are left alone and lost, and the diviner and his god has gone on to steal from others.

2. **God is righteously angry at those who say differently.** (3)

When God says that his anger is hot, we need to pay attention. God's anger is intense against these shepherds (these rulers of Israel) because they were supposed to be representing him, but were representing Satan. Here is a theme in this book, that I really want you to be impressed with. (Explain)

What is a shepherd supposed to do? He is supposed to give of himself for the life and health of his sheep. Everything that he does is to be in pursuit of the life and health of his sheep. What does a false shepherd do? He pretends to pursue the life and health of his sheep, but is actually using the sheep for his own comforts. He does not love the sheep. He loves himself, and therefore, uses the sheep. Instead of feeding the sheep, he devours the sheep. He does not care about them. A good shepherd feeds his sheep healthy food that helps them grow. But those false shepherds are those who lead you away from trusting in God but they have nothing legitimate to offer in return. I will address this issue in particular next week (chapter 11).

3. **God's salvation is amazing.** (3-12)

There is a very good reason why God demands your exclusive trust and worship of him. No one else loves you like he does and no one else can save you like he does. No one else can restore you like he does and no one else can restore this world like he can.

Now, here is a very important concept to grasp because this text is contrasting the two choices that you have; man's way or God's way. When sin entered the world through Adam it affected everything like a plague. People began to distrust each other, hate one another, kill one another, and use one another. The only unity that the world experienced was at the Tower of Babel, where the world came together in order to proclaim its own greatness and itself as god. The Tower of Babel represented the capital of man's kingdoms which all proclaim that we are going to save ourselves.

We attempt to use science, technology, psychology and governments as our towers of Babel to give us answers so that we do not have to trust in God. They do not work! They do not last. They cannot save. They may sound promising, but they make promises they cannot keep. Zechariah points out reasons to trust in God. His salvation is amazing for several reasons:

a. **It is motivated by his love.** (3, 6)

The LORD of hosts cares for his flock. (3b)

How do you respond when you hear of a big, powerful man, using his strength to terrorize and torment children? That makes your blood boil, doesn't it? But, how do you

respond when you see a big, powerful man carefully and gently holding, a little one? It is attractive. It is great. It is heart-warming. That is our God! He cares for his flock. (v6) It says that he has compassion on them. God's love is an essential attribute of his character. The sum total of God's character is his glory. So, when I say that God saves and rescues people because it puts his glory on display, I am saying that the love of God is what drives God to save and rescue. He is motivated to save because he truly loves his flock. The love of God is real. It is intense. But do not think of it as being sentimental. His love is powerful!

b. It is powerful. (3-12)

Remember that Zechariah is contrasting the salvation of God with what the idols (we could call it man's way) offers. Let me illustrate it this way. Let's say that you have a doctorate in political science with a specialty in Mideast politics. The new president taps you as the Secretary of State and you are given the job to find and implement a peace plan in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. Then, after you get that done, do the same thing with North Korea, South Korea and Japan. Go!

What could you do? On the one hand, there are people who look at our government and say that since we are the richest nation on the earth, with the most powerful military that we should do something. You just can't watch people keep killing themselves, right? But, what exactly can you do? Sure, you could invade and set up a police state, but as soon as you leave, it will go back to the same. Your might can only go so far. But God's is unlimited.

This is the language of a holy war. God is the ultimate warrior as we saw in chapter 9 from last week: his terror is overwhelming and his salvation is indescribable. But the power of God's salvation is not just raw force that intimidates, awes and forces surrender. God's salvation is so powerful that it changes people from the inside out. Life-long enemies can get along for a short while if they encounter an enemy larger than they are, but what happens when the enemy is defeated? Unless the issues that formerly divided them are addressed, then the people will go right back to where they were.

But, God's salvation does more than defeat the enemies of his children, it changes them so that Judah (southern kingdom) and Joseph (northern kingdom) will one day be reconciled. There is no army on earth that can reconcile enemies. No army on earth is that powerful. Only God is powerful enough to take people who were enemies and make them friends.

Notice the ways God changes people:

- v.3 from sheep to war-horses.
- v.5, 7 from weak victims to mighty men
- v.7 from sad to joyful
- v.8 from wandering to gathered
- v.9-12 from scattered to rulers

You will see that in this text, God says “*I will*” about ten times. His salvation is so powerful that it causes the change. God’s salvation changes the very nature of people. Zechariah does not tell us how this happens, but he gives us a clue in verse 4.

c. It is fulfilled in Christ (4)

In these final chapters of Zechariah, there are a number of prophecies about Christ. Here, God promises that from Judah will come the cornerstone, the tent peg and the battle bow. All of these are referring to Christ. The cornerstone is the foundation stone that joins two main walls and orients the entire structure. Psalm 118 says that man will reject the cornerstone. They will stumble over it but the cornerstone is approved by God. The tent peg could refer to a peg that anchors a tent into the ground or a large peg that is pounded into a wall where essential items in the home hang from. Either way it is considered an indispensable item for a dwelling. The final item is the battle bow, which speaks of fearlessness and effectiveness in war. Of course all of these are pointing to Christ and it is very fitting. God is establishing a clear contrast. Who are you going to trust? Are you going to trust in yourself or are you going to trust in me? I am the only one who can save you. 500 years later Christ came. He was that cornerstone, and just as Psalm 118 says, they tripped over the cornerstone. They rejected the foundation. Zechariah says in chapter 12 that one day they will look at him, the one they pierced, and they will mourn. Only Christ can save them, and only Christ can save you. That does not mean that Christ helps you save yourself. That means that only Christ can save you. You cannot contribute anything to the rescue of your soul. This is hard to grasp, because we want to think that while we are not perfect, that we are good enough to be more likely to be rescued than someone else, or good enough to help out a little bit. It is so difficult to grasp the fact that in my natural condition I am utterly bankrupt of any merit before God. I deserve his wrath. That is so hard to grasp. My heart is pre-programmed to believe that I can offer something to God that will earn me a break or a favor. And what complicates the picture so badly is that religions appear to flourish because they preach the opposite of this. Do you realize how easy it would be to raise money, if I could promise you forgiveness, or promise you favor, or promise you eternal life if you gave some money? But, I can’t do that because your money cannot buy you anything from God. God does not need your money and any religion that offers you forgiveness based on you performing ceremonies or giving money is making you promises, it cannot keep. Christ offers you forgiveness that is free. If it cost money, his forgiveness would favor the rich. If it could be earned, it would favor the strong. It is free. And since it does not favor the rich or the strong, guess who it favors? It favors the humble. That is why so many people stumble over Christ. In order to come to faith in Christ, you have to trust in him alone. Only Christ lived the life you could not live and only Christ died the death you could not die. His death paid the penalty for your sin, in full. There is nothing left for you to pay. Trust him. Our God saves. His salvation is amazing because it is permanent.

d. It gathers. (8-11)

There are two primary ways people look at many of these promises. 1) OT Israel has been replaced by the NT church. Therefore, all of these promises to Israel that were not fulfilled after the Babylonian exile are fulfilled by the church in a spiritual sense. 2) OT Israel was the people of God then, who were called by God to reveal his glory to the nations. They failed. The church is now the people called by God from every tribe, language and nation (including Israel) to reveal God's glory to the nations. However, God's plan for the church does not eliminate God's future plan for Israel. He made these promises of re-gathering and promises of establishing them in the land and defeating their enemies and putting his glory on display through them. This second position is what makes the most amount of sense to me. What I like about the first view is the fact that we can look at the OT and gain great insight into the character of God and how he cares for and treats his people. But, I believe that the day is coming when Israel will not only regain her former glory, but it will surpass anything that she ever had. And I believe that every believing Gentile will rejoice.

I will explain more about that in chapters 12-14, but here in chapter 10, it is God who makes these wonderful promises. Notice, for example v.8. God says, "*I will whistle for them and gather them in, for I have redeemed them.*" This is how amazing and attractive God's salvation is. He gently whistles and his people respond. They are drawn by his calling. They are compelled by his voice. They hear his music and they come. They come back home. There is no god that can do that.

e. It is worth believing.

If your child had neuroblastoma, and there was a doctor who could cure it, I have no doubt that you would do what that doctor said. You and I are born with a condition that is infinitely worse than any childhood cancer. And only Christ can cure that. But you must come to him on his terms, not yours. But why wouldn't you? He is worth believing.