

Title: More than you know
Text: Zechariah 1.7-17
Theme: God's plan is not only good, it is well-informed.
Series: Zechariah #2
Prop Stmtnt: God keeps his promises based on his omniscience and character.
Aim: My aim is help my people rest in the good, wise and perfect plan of God for this world, which is always for their good.

“I don't care anymore. I really don't. You can judge me. You can hate me. You can laugh at me and mock me, but I've stopped caring about anyone or anything.” You know people like, don't you? Then, they walk out. Sometimes they come back and sometimes they don't. They quit work, or school, a relationship, a commitment and sometimes, they quit on life. When every card in your hand is going to be trumped, why play? When every important person in your life has walked out on you, why trust? Why keep trying? When promise after promise after promise made to you is broken, why believe? Why believe anything?

I was at the athletic banquet when he gave his speech and handed out the awards. I watched him coach that season and appreciated his discipline and relentless encouragement. The students thrived under his leadership and the connection many of them felt with him. A month later he was dead. Suicide. The immediate empathy for his family eventually gives way to another group of students who go deeper into their shells, hiding under layers of escape mechanisms trying to shield themselves from another let down. They can't help but wonder who else is going to let me down. Why believe anything? I talk with people, students and adults who say that they don't care, but they really do, but are tired of being hurt and don't know what to do, except now do to others what has been done to them. What do you do when it seems that no one else plays by the rules that you have to keep?

This morning we are looking at what appears to be as an obscure text in the OT. But, when you understand the setting, then the message of this text and this book becomes compelling and gripping, if you dare to believe. The name of the book is Zechariah because that is the name of the prophet who wrote it. His name means, “God remembers.” I am guessing that his dad gave him this name in faith. And yet, there were many things in Zechariah's life that would cause him to question if God had really remembered. The fact was, so many of the leaders and authorities in his life were frauds and for the people who wanted to believe God and wanted to believe his promises, it was confusing. It makes it hard to believe in the promises of the ultimate authority when your immediate authorities keep lying to you and letting you down. As far as you can tell, you have three options: 1) Sell your soul and join the hypocrites 2) Keep believing and having your heart crushed or 3) Quit. Get high, get stoned, numb your pain, cover your heart, and give up on life. There does not seem to be any good option. And we wonder, does God even know? If he knows does he care? If he knows and if he cares then what is God going to do about it?

Read Text:

This is an incredible text. This is one of those “put your hand over your mouth” texts because either your jaw is about to hit the floor, or you just realized how small and limited your understanding is. Why is it that we are awed by mountains, glaciers and oceans? Why are we fascinated by the unbridled power of a hurricane, the deafening concussions of thunder and the blinding flashes of lightning? Is it not because all of those things illustrate a power that demands your respect and even worship? I love this text for all of that and for the same reasons that I would chase tornadoes if I lived in Kansas. This text reveals a world and a power that is as real as you are, but is hidden from your view. Rightfully understood, this 1st vision that Zechariah has reveals that ...

I. **There is more going on than what you realize.** (7-11)

There is also more going on than what this vision reveals. This is the 1st of 8 visions that Zechariah has one night. These 8 visions communicate personal and powerful messages that Zechariah is then charged with telling his people. Like every word from God, it is a double-edged sword. God’s promises of blessing to those who accept his truth by faith also bring a judgment to those who do not. Every prophet bore the weight of faithfully handling revelation from God. As he echoed God’s Word he experienced the joy of those who received by faith and experienced the grief and rejection of those who did not. Being a prophet of God was a necessary but dangerous job. Jesus made this evident.

Zechariah was a priest in Israel who was from a family of priests. In fact, his family was a well-known family that returned to Jerusalem from Babylon when Cyrus, King of the Persian Empire gave them permission to return in 538 B.C. The primary function of a priest was to serve at the Temple. But, without a Temple, the priests were not able to do their job. It is now 520 B.C. 18 years have passed since the Jews returned to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon and the only measurable thing that they have been able to get accomplished was the rebuilding of the Temple’s foundation. Ever since then, nothing has happened. Cyrus the Great is dead. His son Cambyses is dead. Darius is now on the throne and the Jews who were supposed to rebuild their land, their cities, their nation, their Jerusalem and their Temple appear to be at risk of being assimilated once again by the pagan cultures around them or destroyed by their continual internal fighting and strife. This is NOT how life was supposed to be. This was not what they expected from God. What is going on? Well, the truth is, you and I really have no idea what all is going on. There is so much more going on than what we realize. We only see our tiny, tiny little life, in our tiny little corner of our world. God not only sees it all, but he has his fingers on the pulse of everything in this world. God has his fingers on the pulse of every single heartbeat in his creation.

Chapter 1 begins with a message from God that was given to Zechariah. We looked at this last Sunday. It was not an easy message to proclaim, but it was a needed message and Zechariah declared this message of repentance. Now, two months later, Zechariah is given a vision. I think it is possible to infer that since Zechariah was faithful to proclaim that first message that God now entrusts him with even more. This revelation is not just heard, it is seen. God pulls back the curtain of reality and allows Zechariah to witness an

event that should change the way you look at God and they way that you understand this world. For a time Zechariah is allowed to see the unseen world.

A. **The unseen world.** (7-10)

Zechariah either had this vision at night, which adds to the suspense, mystery, secrecy and even sense of danger. Zechariah sees a man riding on a red horse. The Hebrew word translated red could include chestnut, I think because Zechariah uses the word “Behold” that the horse is probably, well, red! I think that he is stunned by this. Something very unusual is happening here. The horse was standing among the myrtle trees (pic) in the glen. But, he is not alone. Behind him were red, sorrel and white horses. These are no plow horses. Horses in the Bible speak of power, speed and royalty. There were at least 3 others, perhaps even more. A myrtle tree has very thick foliage, so we what we have here is a group of several horses (with riders) who have met together at a predetermined spot under thick foliage, down in a low spot hidden from view, down in a glen in an area between areas of higher elevation and at night. This meeting is not supposed to be seen. And of course Zechariah has never seen something like this before and he wants to know, so he asks the angel who is with him. “*What are these, my lord?*” This is the only thing that Zechariah says in this text. He is like an intruder. He is witnessing something that looks as if it is out of this world, when in reality it is in this world. Of course, having an angel dialoging with him about all of this is a bit unusual too. But, the angel answers Zechariah and tells him, “*I will show you what they are.*” But it’s the rider on the red horse who answers Zechariah’s question and tells him something that he had no idea about. “*These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.*” And then the rest of the riders speak to the angel of the LORD and give him an accounting of their travels.

Do you now see what you don’t see? This is a high level council meeting of specific high-ranking angelic beings. These powerful beings that exude royalty and authority have successfully completed a clandestine mission. These angelic beings were sent by God to roam the earth and they brought back their report to this angel who will in turn report to God.

B. **The knowledge of God** (11)

At this point these angelic riders on these powerful horses give the sum of their report now to this angel who was talking with Zechariah. This angel is described as “the angel of the LORD.” Zechariah is in what I would call some “tall cotton.” And these angels tell him that “*We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.*” The date of this vision (v.7) is Feb. 15, 519 B.C. The empire under Darius is at rest. When he ascended the throne, he had several rebellions to address and he did. But now, his throne is established. The Persians are in charge and the world is at rest. But, look at the use of the word “behold”. It is striking. In other words, note this. Look at this. I take this to mean that something is not right with this picture. The earth is at rest. Meaning, the earth is at rest and it shouldn’t be at rest. Something is wrong. What is wrong? The Temple is not built. In other words, God’s people have no means by which to meet with God. And

since that is the entire plan of God from the beginning, the status quo is not acceptable. Something is going to change.

Have you ever seen anything like this? Have you ever been invited into the secret council meetings of the high-ranking angelic forces who are discussing the world conditions? Neither had Zechariah. And what does the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo learn? He learns that there is a whole lot more going on than what he realizes. And specifically, question #1 is answered isn't it? Does God even know what is going on in your life? Oh yea he knows. He knows everything that is going on in your life and around your life. God stays fully informed. Well, if God knows, does God care? We are about to find out.

II. **God is personally invested in his plan.** (12-15)

This is fascinating on several levels. 1) Here is an angel praying. 2) This angel is pleading with God to do something about the apparent discrepancy. The people of God are in Jerusalem and things are not well for them, even though things are for the time being at rest in the rest of the world. 3) Why is this angel talking like this? This angel is a created being who does not know everything but is asking questions based on his understanding and expectations of God's character and promises. Do you know what I mean? God has a history of showing mercy towards his people. This angel has witnessed that. He knows all of the things that God has done and what is happening right now does not seem to fit with what he has come to expect from God. Is it right to expect God to be merciful to his people? Yes. Zechariah's expectations and concerns for what is going on in Jerusalem are not out of line. God's track record is a resume of mercy. So, the angel asks.

A. **Questioning God** (in faith) (12)

I am so grateful for verse 12! Here is a perfect example of how to talk with God about things that do not make sense. This angel is a created being. He has knowledge, but is not omniscient. He has power but is not omnipotent. He is exceedingly fast but is not omnipresent. He knows his place. He knows that he is creation and that God is Creator. And since angels are created beings that did not sin, this angel has no sin and is not sinning or expressing doubt in this question. He does not demand anything from God, but is still free to ask God. He does not understand why God has not yet acted, so he asks how long before God acts. He knows that God will act. This question is asked in faith, not accused in doubt.

Where did this angel get his sense of right, wrong, justice, and mercy? He got it from God. Where did this angel get his sense of protection, affection, care and ownership over the people of God? He got it from God. We get the sense from this angel that he feels the weight of the suffering of the people of God. Beloved, if an angel of God can ask the question of "how long" so can we. But, ask in faith.

B. **God's response** (13)

Is God put out by the question? Not at all! In fact instead of challenging the angel for even asking the question, God uses the question as an opportunity to include others in on what his plan is. In fact, "*the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me*" Zechariah said. Isn't that beautiful? God is not put out when you ask him about his activities and plans. He loves it.

This is so different than what we often see leaders do, isn't it? Have you ever tried to ask someone a question who was over you and they made you feel like an idiot for even questioning them? Now, granted some people who ask questions are themselves arrogant jerks and in those cases you don't mind when they get put into place.

I was in a class in college one day with a guy like that. He tried to challenge the professor on just about everything. And this professor was, well, he was no slouch. And he was patient for a while until the kid kept pushing and pushing until finally the prof stopped, looked at the guy over his glasses and said, "Young man, I have translated every word of this Bible from its original languages into English. I do believe that I am more qualified to speak on this subject than you." I am not talking about that. Here is a good question and God loves it. The fact that the LORD answered in a gracious manner only encourages us to keep asking. God is not threatened by your questions because he has nothing to hide.

Now comes the rest of the story. God is exceedingly jealous for his people and he is exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease. And here is another fascinating insight in the Sovereignty of God. He used the nations to punish his people for their sin, but they abused their God-given positions of power and are being held accountable for it. So, the people of God are not at rest, but they will be and the rest of the world that is at rest, won't be for long. Does God care? He is exceedingly jealous for his people and exceedingly angry at those who attack them. Yes, he cares. So, what is he going to do?

III. **God will keep his promises.** (16)

This promise by God is great encouragement to Zechariah. The work on the Temple had stopped. The city was still exposed because the walls had not been rebuilt. The people were vulnerable, discouraged and running very short on hope. Lies were being told to the King about the intentions of the Jews and everything was at a standstill. But now God had spoken and God said that it was going to happen. The Temple would be rebuilt and the city would be prosperous again. Therefore, the word for the people of God is to take heart. God is not slow or reluctant. There is so much more going on than what you realize but yet, God is eager for you to call upon him. But get ready to get with it. God is going to keep his promises. And you will not be disappointed.

IV. **Believe and Act in faith.** (17)

In v.14 and again in v.17 the angel of the LORD delivers a message from God for Zechariah to cry out. Now Zechariah has a mission. He is to cry out. He is to proclaim the message of God. How is that going to be received? It doesn't matter does it? He has a

mission. What has changed in Jerusalem? Nothing. There is no building taking place. The walls are in ruins. The threats still exist. The people are still discouraged and the political environment is not promising. But Zechariah has a mission. "Cry out." Share what you have seen and heard. It doesn't matter how people respond. Zechariah has a mission and so do you.

If Zechariah only looked at his immediate circumstances, he could conclude that God had abandoned him. But now God had opened his eyes that he might get a glimpse of what the unseen world. Knowledge like that is more than amazing and overwhelming. It is a burden. You are responsible now for what you know. For while Zechariah could look at his own land with hope, he would never be able to look at the other nations the same. Now he knew that it was only a matter of time before God acted upon his anger. God had promised this to Israel and had done it and he would do it again.

I call Zechariah, the Revelation of the OT. Zechariah's first vision here is that of 4 horses. The first 4 seals that are opened in John's vision in Revelation 6 unleash 4 horses. What Zechariah saw was fulfilled. What John saw will be fulfilled. Through Zechariah and John and other portions of God's Word, you have been made aware that there is an enormous unseen world that is as real as anything that you can see and feel. You have been entrusted with information from the councils and plans of God and you know that this world is heading for danger. There is a weight, a burden of responsibility that is yours because you have heard this. For some of you, you need to admit the seriousness of God and quit pretending that life is all up to you, and come to faith in Christ. Others of you who profess faith in Christ need to own the burden. We don't look at this world the way others do. We know that darkness is coming. We must warn them. We must cry out. We must share the news of how people can be rescued from the coming wrath. It is through Christ and Christ alone.