

PRISONERS OF HOPE

(Zechariah 9:9-12)

- Intro: The settings are different.
- The pictures are the same.
 - #High school gym.
 - #National Guard armory.
 - *Cots set up.
 - +To accommodate people forced from their homes.
 - =Because of a natural disaster.
 - In Joplin, Missouri.
 - #Tornado.
 - In Minot, North Dakota.
 - #Flooding.
 - In Los Alamos, New Mexico.
 - #Wild fires.

In all of these places.

- People sitting on their bunks.
 - #Nowhere to go.
- Homes.
 - #Inaccessible.
 - #Destroyed.
- Jobs.
 - #Slowed down.
 - #Shut down.
 - #Closed.
- Schools.
 - #Damaged.
 - #Re-appropriated.
 - *For emergency shelters.

All of these people.

- Waiting.
 - #Flood waters to recede.
 - #Businesses to reopen.
 - #Homes.
 - #Dried out.
 - #Repaired.
 - #Rebuilt.

- Like prisoners.
- #Not locked behind bars.
- #But not free to go.
- *Where they want.
- *When they want.
- #Prisoners of hope.
- *Zechariah 9:9-12.

I. What Does It Mean To Be A Prisoner Of Hope?

A. Our Adult Bible Study.

1. Looking at the Psalms.
 - a. Individual laments.
 - b. Corporate laments.
 - c. Penitential psalms.
2. Last week.
 - a. We were reading one of the penitential psalms.
 - b. Member of the group commented.
 - "It sounds like the psalmist was at the end of his rope."
 - c. I said:
 - "That's an interesting observation."
 - "Because being able to express these feelings of despair."
 - # "Sign of hope."
 - d. I observed:
 - In Hebrew.
 - # Same word can mean:
 - * Hope.
 - * Rope.
 - So that even if you feel like you're at the end of your rope.
 - # There still is hope.
 - e. What I didn't remember.
 - Root of that Hebrew word means:
 - # "To wait."
3. To be a prisoner of hope.
 - a. May mean sleeping on a cot.
 - In a high school gym.
 - # Expecting to go home again.
 - b. But needing to wait.
 - Until:
 - # There is a place to go.
 - # There is a home to go to again.

- B. Zechariah Was A Prophet To Prisoners Of Hope.
1. Today's reading.
 - a. Only time we have a reading from Zechariah.
 - In the entire three-year cycle.
 - #Revised Common Lectionary.
 - b. Although Matthew and John quote it.
 - In their Palm Sunday accounts.
 - #Matthew 21:5.
 - #John 12:15.
 2. Zechariah has two main sections.
 - a. Zechariah 1-8.
 - Post-exilic.
 - #After the Babylonian exile.
 - Together with Haggai.
 - #Addresses the need for:
 - *Rebuilding the Temple.
 - *Restoring the nation.
 - b. Zechariah 9-14.
 - Couple centuries later.
 - #After the conquest of Alexander the Great.
 - *332 B.C.
 - #When Israel was again ruled by an occupying force.
 - They were prisoners of hope.
 - #Zechariah described for them.
 - *Ideal king.
 - +Who is:
 - =Triumphant.
 - =Victorious.
 - +Who is a just/righteous savior.
 - =Another way to translate the Hebrew.
 - Zechariah 9:9.
 - +Who will restore the territory of the Davidic monarchy.
 - =From sea to shining sea.
 - Not by military might.
 - #War horses.
 - #Chariots.
 - #Battle bows.
 - But on a donkey.
 - #Beast of burden.

II. How Are We Prisoners Of Hope?

A. Paul Describes An Internal Struggle In Each Of Us (Romans 7:15-25a).

1. Problem.

a. Not ignorance.

-Not knowing the difference between:

#Right and wrong.

#Good and bad.

-Most of the time we know very well.

#Right from wrong.

#Good from bad.

b. Not doing.

-What we know to do.

-Paul says:

#“I know what’s right.”

*“Deep down inside I really want to do it.”

+“But I don’t.”

#“I know what’s wrong.”

*“Deep down inside I really don’t want to do those things.”

+“But I do.”

#“It’s almost like it’s not me.”

*“It is this sin:”

+“Has a life and identity of its own.”

+“Lives in me.”

2. Spiritual tug of war that goes on inside of each and every one of us.

a. It is like:

-God:

#Grabs us by one elbow.

*In the waters of Holy Baptism.

#Says:

*“You belong to me now.”

-Satan:

#Doesn’t says:

*“Okay, Lord.”

*“He’s all yours.”

#Grabs us by the other elbow.

#Says:

*“Oh, yeah?”

*“Let’s see about that!”

b. Back and forth we go.

3. We are prisoners.
 - a. Sin.
 - b. Our sins.
 - sins.
 - #Moralistic failings we are all guilty of.
 - *Lying.
 - *Stealing.
 - *Cheating.
 - *Coveting.
 - *Lusting.
 - #sins can be forgiven.
 - Sin.
 - #Condition that resides in every fiber of our being.
 - *Keeping us from doing the good.
 - +We know to do.
 - *Enticing us to do the evil.
 - +We know we shouldn't do.
 - #We need to be liberated from Sin.
 - c. Confession from the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.
 - “We confess that we are in bondage to sin,”
 - #“And cannot free ourselves.”
 - We are prisoners.
4. But we are prisoners of hope.
 - a. Waiting on God’s army of one.
 - Who is our righteous savior.
 - Who comes not with:
 - #Soldiers.
 - #Chariots.
 - #Battle bows.
 - *Tanks.
 - *Helicopters.
 - *Cruise missiles.
 - Who comes:
 - #On a donkey.
 - #To a cross.
 - #With the Holy Spirit.
 - b. So that we can be liberated.
 - Set free.
 - Empowered.
 - #To do the good we know to do.
 - #To avoid the evil we know not to do.

- B. Jesus Describes An External Manifestation Of That Internal Struggle.
1. Matthew 11:16-19.
 2. People who are so set in their ways.
 - a. They don't respond appropriately to situations.
 - Not dancing at a wedding.
 - Not mourning at a funeral.
 - #Something even a child at play knows.
 - b. They don't respond appropriately to people.
 - John came neither eating nor drinking.
 - #People thought:
 - *He's crazy.
 - *He has a demon.
 - Jesus came eating and drinking.
 - #People thought:
 - *He's a glutton and a drunkard!
 - *He's a friend of tax collectors and sinners!
 3. Such people are prisoners.
 - a. Prisoners to their own stereotypes.
 - b. Prisoners to their own prejudices.
 - c. Prisoners to the way things have always been done in the past.
 4. But we are prisoners of hope.
 - a. Trusting that we're not going to be sleeping:
 - In that high school gym forever.
 - b. Trusting that Easter opens not just a grave.
 - But opens us to the possibility of whole new way:
 - #Being.
 - #Doing.

Concl: Here at Ascension we are working to Rekindle the Fire.
 -We are not prisoners of the past.
 -We are prisoners of hope.

