**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 7-23-2023
Majoring in the Minors – Zechariah**

It was a true blessing to have Vacation Bible School here at Chestnut Grove this week. I remember being in Vacation Bible School growing up and the learning and fun that takes place.

And seeing the hunger to know and love God grow in these children brings me joy for all that God has planned for them in this future.

But I don’t know about you, I think that hope for a bright future is not the norm for most people. It is more common to look back at days past and think “now those were the days.” Maybe it’s in thinking to when things seemed simpler or when dear loved ones were nearer. And certainly, we are called to remember and to give thanks to God for every good and perfect gift from God.

But sometimes people can be so focused on the past that it is difficult to live in the present. I think of songs like *Glory Days* or *Those Were the Days*.

The message of those songs is that things were once great, but not really anymore. We had fun, we had success, but now things are difficult. And the best joy we can find today is in looking back and remembering the good times.

Again, while it is healthy and biblical to remember and give thanks to God for every good gift that we have experienced in life, to much looking back can make it difficult to move ahead.

In traffic there is something called rubber necking. Things become very slow when people are turning their necks to look over and back at an accident.

The big concern with this glory days type thinking is that God’s people are to be people of hope. And hope involves the future. Hope is a confidence of good things ahead. Living as people of hope is critical to our spiritual wellbeing.

And so we come now to our second to last of the minor prophets today – the prophet Zechariah. And one theme that is so prevalent in Zechariah is that God wanted His people to be people of hope.

Now why would the people of Israel be struggling to live with hope? They had been released by the Persians to return home. They had finally got to rebuilding the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, with some strong encouragement from the prophet Haggai.

But the Temple is now built. Things seem to be looking up. But the problem was that most of the people of Israel were not very hopeful for a bright and glorious future. They were not truly an independent nation. They had to still answer to the Persians.

It was very tempting to look back at the glory days and think “those were the days.” The best things have already happened. Let’s just think about the past and live there.

This was how the people of Israel were feeling at the time of the prophet Zechariah. Israel was once a strong and powerful nation. Jerusalem was the great capital city. The Temple was glorious and the dwelling place of God on earth amongst God’s people.

But now the Temple had been destroyed. The city was conquered and in need of being rebuilt. Even though the Temple were now being rebuilt, there was a sadness that the best of Israel’s history was behind them. Those were the days, the people would have thought.

But the Lord spoke through the prophet Zechariah loud and clear, that the best was yet to be.

To set the context a bit, Zechariah ministered around the same time as Haggai. Most likely his ministry would have been around the same time, or perhaps a little after that of Haggai. And although many of the exiles were now back into the Promised Land, there were exiles of Judah and Israel living all over the place. And there was this sad atmosphere that pervaded the land.

The dates of the messages that Zechariah was moved by the Lord to prophecy are very clearly given within the Book. The first message was either late October or early November 520 BC and his final message was from December 5, 518 BC.

In this vivid and profound (and in some ways complex) book, Zechariah is given several visions from God about the future. These were glimpses of hope for the future. God was telling Zechariah and through Zechariah, telling all of Israel, that He is not finished with them yet. There is a bright future ahead.

I could see someone giving a sermon series dedicated to unpacking these visions in a similar way that a sermon series could unpack the vivid imagery found in the Book of Revelation. But both books – Zechariah and Revelation – call God’s people to be a people of hope. These books call people to look ahead to the future, knowing that God is ultimately in control and that He is working out His plans and purposes and that He invites people to walk with Him as He does.

While we do not have the time to unpack every vision and message of the Book of Zechariah today, the central message of the bright future for the Jewish people is focused on a coming King. This King would be the righteous Branch of the line of King David. This King is also unique in that He will be a priest who will represent the people to God and represent God to the people. This King would be a humble shepherd who would one day humbly arrive in Jerusalem on a humble donkey. All of this is foretold in this prophetic book.

The hope for Israel and the world would revolve on this coming priest-king.

And as we turn to our featured Scripture for today, we find yet another important message about this amazing Person.

**They will look on[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23056b)**] me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. 11On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be as great as the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, 13the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, 14and all the rest of the clans and their wives.**

**“On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.**

This coming figure would deal with sin in a single day. This, of course, would be fulfilled on the day that Jesus gave His life for the sins of the world. Jesus would choose to be the sin bearer for all of humanity. He would take the place for each person and die as a sacrifice for all humanity’s sins. Just amazing. Amazing love, how can it be that You my King would die for us.

The Lord has always been faithful to the people of Israel in their history. He created them as a nation, He brought them out of slavery, He made them into a great nation, and after He punished them for their rebellion He brought them out of exile.

It would be 500 years before these prophecies of the coming righteous Branch would be fulfilled. Generations would come and go. But Zechariah wanted every generation to live into the bright future that God was bringing about. They were to look back and remember God’s faithfulness and have confidence that God would be faithful to fulfill His promises in the future. One day, the Messiah would come. One day, He would take His place as King forever. One day, sin would be dealt with.

And so the people of Israel were to be people of great hope. There were not to be glory days people or Those Were the Days people, but the best is yet to be people.

Friends, what is the main thing, then, to take with us from Zechariah?

We are to be people of great hope as well. We are to be the best is yet to be people rather than glory days or Those were the days people.

And again, it is all because of Jesus. The righteous Branch HAS COME. The humble King did arrive into Jerusalem on the donkey. This priest-king has atoned for all humanity’s sins.

And because God has come to us in Jesus Christ, we can look to the future with confidence. We are to remember that Jesus continues to build His church today and we are a part of it. We are to remember that He has given us His Holy Spirit to empower us and guide us to live as His witnesses in this world. And we are to remember that He is coming again and great will be that day for God’s people.

This does not mean that we are to forget the past. Instead, may our hope for the future grow as we remember and give thanks for God’s faithfulness in the past.

It is truly tempting to look around the world today and feel like the best days are behind us. The American culture seems increasingly hostile to a biblical worldview.

On a more personal level, we may feel like the best years are behind us. Maybe our physical health is beginning to fail. Maybe we are struggling financially or relationally or whatever. But we need to reject the lie that are best days are behind us.

Jesus is not finished with us. We are a work in progress, growing and becoming more like our savior. The best is yet to be. We are to look forward with hope and keep following after Jesus.

Paul the Apostle was a ‘the best is yet to be person.’ Think of all that God accomplished through him in spreading the gospel. But Paul writes “forgetting what is behind, I press on toward the …………” In other words, I am not going to live in the glory days of the past. I’m sure that Paul remembered and didn’t really forget what God had done in and through him. But he was emphasizing that his focus was on the present and on using the present and future to grow in Christ and to be of service to Christ in the world.

 But Jesus is building a glorious church. While the enemy is at work, God is at work all the more. And God wins. One day the kingdoms of this world will be swallowed up by the Kingdom of God. One day Jesus will return. He is our blessed hope.

But in the meantime, whether it is one year or 500 years or however long it will be until Jesus Christ returns, please know that He is alive and well and ruling and reigning from Heaven. And we have the victory in Him.

When we live every day to get to know our Triune God better, we will walk in joy and hope. And as we do this consistently, the world will take notice and many will be drawn to Christ. The New Testament teaches us that Christ is in us and He is the hope of glory. May our lives testify to a God’s offer for everyone for a bright and beautiful future in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray…

Resources:

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3KEhWTnWvE>

The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament – chapter on Zechariah