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Midway Presbyterian Church
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The Lord in Our Midst

Scripture: Zechariah 1:18–2:13

18 And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns!
19 And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these?” And he said to me, “These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.”
20 Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen.
21 And I said, “What are these coming to do?” He said, “These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one raised his head. And these have come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it.”

2:1 And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand!
2 Then I said, “Where are you going?” And he said to me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.”
3 And behold, the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him
4 and said to him, “Run, say to that young man, ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it.
5 And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ”
6 Up! Up! Flee from the land of the north, declares the LORD. For I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, declares the LORD.
7 Up! Escape to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.
8 For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye:
9 “Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me.
10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.
11 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.
12 And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.”
13 Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling. [1]

[1] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Zec 1:18–2:13). (2025). Crossway Bibles.

Introduction

Visions in the Bible are largely meant to be encouraging, not confusing. I know that might sound strange to say as we're in the midst of these visions in the book of Zechariah. There are eight of them, and we are covering two of them here this morning. And yet, there might be obviously some things that are a bit hard to understand, and we perhaps are puzzled by them. But there's an interpreting angel here to to tell Zechariah what they mean and to explain them.

And I think you will find that in other parts of what are known as apocalyptic literature, in portions of Ezekiel and Daniel, and the book of Revelation. These things are meant to be primarily a comfort and an encouragement, to put steel in the bones of God's people. You might say, not to to confuse, though sometimes I understand they are difficult. But that's the trajectory of the book of Zechariah - full of hope in the midst of turmoil and trouble.

You read throughout the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that there was great opposition to the building back after the people have returned from exile, from Babylon, and there's now this rebuilding phase and it's met immediately with opposition and trouble both outside and inside, but primarily outside. And the work had stopped and the Lord would call them not simply to begin the rebuilding of it all but to turn to him, to return to him. That was the real issue. And they did in chapter one. And it's in light of that they're repenting.

It said as the the Lord of hosts has dealt with us. They have acknowledged that. So, they repented in verse six and what follows on the heels of that. So, the Lord encourages them with these great visions, these eight visions of hopefulness.

I think you probably remember what's often referred to as the reformation motto of “post tenebras lux”, that Latin phrase that means “after darkness light” that the reformers took upon their lips as they saw their work. But I think there was a prior motto to that, the sort of pre-reformation as you might say, the Waldensians, Peter Waldo would have a different sort of motto. Not that either one of them would disagree with either of the mottos of course, but “lux lucet in tenebris” would be the Waldensian motto of “light shining in the darkness”.

It's what you see here in Zechariah. All is trouble and discouragement and dismay. And these visions have come in the night and they're like the light shining in the darkness for not only Zechariah but for his people - to press on. And what is the essence of that, I think you get little glimpses of it - each vision perhaps growing but giving different facets of it. And here in these two visions put together, is this promise of the Lord to be in the midst of his people - to dwell with His people.

It is the great covenant promise that's made from the beginning of the Bible, and you see straight through to the end that it is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, who would come and tabernacle amongst us as we'll see later on. I mean that's the great promise. It's what certainly the reformers would seek to articulate and proclaim in various ways. It's the promise here in this great book of Zechariah. These two visions teaching us that the Lord means to dwell with His people forever. That is the great promise. And he does so in four ways, by way of four things.

1. The Lord Delivers His People

He delivers his people.

You see that first the Lord delivers his people. And this is the first vision, these horns and craftsmen. It may be a little bit strange to us to think about these kinds of things, but horns in the Bible certainly would have communicated something of power and strength - but even more so

violence, violent power and strength in some ways. Negatively, of course, mostly we think about it, but it's the picture of these four horns. They're separate horns. They're not necessarily attached to an animal, though you naturally associate them.

If you think of horns, you think of animals in the Old Testament, and there is some connotation to that for sure. but there's a picture here - the number four is symbolic here to describe comprehensiveness. You see that with the four winds later and it'll be used elsewhere throughout Zechariah to describe something of the constant oppression of God's people from every side, from every direction. Power from north, south, east, and west, all corners of the map, you might say, coming from every side, forces against them.

It's not meant to necessarily associate with every particular nation and ongoingly, but certainly there's mention of Babylon here, of course, and you think of Assyria and Babylon and Persia that they're under now, but the picture is of oppression, opposition from everywhere, a comprehensive sort of oppression. And the Lord has an answer for that. That's a description - that the people of God there are facing opposition from outside and from inside. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, you read that letters being sent, threats galore. Stop that work, they would say, or else.

And God's people have faced that kind of oppression and opposition from the very beginning. You find the apostles of course facing that kind of opposition to preaching the gospel and being told stop preaching in that name or else. And the apostles say, “we will obey God rather than man.” And God's people have had to live in that kind of environment, that kind of oppression, opposition everywhere, from all sides. And you think, what do we do? That's why God's people were greatly discouraged by it.

These official letters coming from those who had authority and power over them to do something about it - they were real threats. What would they do? Well, this vision reminds them of who's ultimately in charge, who's sovereign over all the threats. As we sang in Psalm 46, and we're reminded in the singing of A Mighty Fortress, that the foe is great. They're everywhere. What could we do? We on earth are not his equal. But our God dwells on high and He is more than a match.

And you notice that it's no coincidence that it's four horns and in verse 20 there are four craftsmen. It is God's way of dealing with it. It's an odd sort of thing perhaps to think about horns representing this opposition. And what are these craftsmen? They are tradesmen. It's the same word that's used of those who would build the temple, the tabernacle, and all the furnishings. They are those kinds of people.

And you think of that in the context of the ruin and the rubble in this very time period that Zechariah is prophesying in - the temple and the walls weren't rebuilt. There were still scattered and stones were scattered and there was rubble around. And God sends this picture of these craftsmen to rebuild and it is terrifying to the horns. And God is showing in that kind of way, He will destroy their power and He will rebuild. He will, He will build it. He's made sure of that because He intends to dwell with His people.

There's perhaps even an element here of religious overtones in these horns. There would be horns on the altar of burnt offering. Four horns, and perhaps there's reference to that and the ungodliness of the nations, their pagan false religion that is always seeking to force itself upon God's people. You think of what Babylon did, even living under the the Persians. Of course, it would be better, I suppose, than living under the Babylonians, but it was, well, you worship your God and we'll all get along together.

But there was still a sense of false worship about it and self-deifying power in the pagan world. And even in that, the Lord is saying, "I've got an answer for it. I will shatter all that that seeks to destroy

my people and oppose my people. I will deliver my people from that very thing, from that kind of false worship and from all that is false and evil." It is what we set our hopes on. Of course, the Lord is not merely aware that His people have been scattered and oppressed and opposed. He acts to deliver and restore them.

He's acting. He's promising to act and to come and do just that. We find that from the very beginning, the promise of Genesis 3:15, not just recognizing the sin that's gone on there and what the devil has done, but a promise to come and send one who would crush the head of the devil. That one who would come, the Lord Jesus Christ, and deal with all the forces of darkness and evil and opposition to His people.

It's where you're led in the very closing chapters of the Bible, in Revelation 19 to 22, especially in 19 and 20. There's reference here of course later on to Babylon in chapter 2, but Revelation 19 to 20 gives you that picture of the Lord destroying His enemies in order to deliver His people from their enemies. And that's the great hope of the gospel. The Lord who delivers so that He might dwell with His people forever and ever. And so you see in that verse, the Lord delivers his people.

2. The Lord Multiplies His People

He also multiplies His people.

Look in chapter two, this second vision of a man with a measuring line. He's going around, going to go measure Jerusalem to see what its width is and what its length is. And then there's an angel that comes to the angel that's talking to Zechariah to say, "Wait a second. I want you to give a message to that one who's going to measure Jerusalem and tell them to hang on. I want you to send this message that Jerusalem is going to be too large to contain." Do you see it? It's going to be too big.

Run and say in verse four to that young man, “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls because of the multitude of people and livestock in it.” That terminology that's being used points us back and connects us back certainly to Genesis 3:15 and the overflow of that, but specifically you think of the promise made to Abraham, who was told that the Lord was going to multiply his descendants through that one. That seed, the Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate promise of that that, Paul will refer to in Galatians and even in the book of Romans.

But you see the language of multitude. Abraham, I want you to go and look out at the stars and count them if you can. I'm going to increase. I'm going to make the multitudes unable to be numbered. Like the sand, He would tell him, on the seashore at another time. The Lord intends to build His church and an overwhelming multitude that you can't number.

It's Zechariah telling us, the Lord telling us through Zechariah, something of what the Apostle Paul would say in 2 Corinthians - that our minds need to be set on and are set on things unseen. There are things that are transient here as you look at the state of things. You look at the church, you look in this world and how things are, and it seems rubble and ruin and tragedy and is anyone being saved in this world? Is there anything going on? And the Lord is saying yes, Jesus made a promise. “I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” I am doing something. I am doing a work. He's multiplying. It's a rich encouragement, I would say, to read missionary reports and it's why we do that sort of thing. And sometimes, it seems like the work is so slow in some parts of the world and other parts it seems like it's exploding and sometimes you can be discouraged on the one hand, but it's a reminder of what the Lord is doing in this world.

He's building His church. That promise is being fulfilled even now as you sit as part of that multitude being assembled, a great multitude unable to be numbered. It's the picture in Revelation

7. From every tribe and nation and tongue and language and people from all over the world being gathered and assembled unto the Lord by the gospel. Yes, there's a false gospel being preached all the time, but the true gospel is being preached of the Lord Jesus Christ and a righteousness found in Him received through faith.

And as that is proclaimed, Christ and Him crucified, the Lord is multiplying His people that He might dwell in their midst, dwell in our midst. It's the great gospel promise of what the Lord is doing even now, right now, and will continue to do in our own land. Sometimes, as discouraging as that might be, it's a reminder that this world is certainly not home and those who lead us are not ultimately in charge. And the great work that the Lord is doing, sending out His word to the ends of the earth.

Isn't that how the book of Acts would remind us and teach us, of that very truth that Jesus Himself promised? You're going to receive power from on high, from the Holy Spirit. And you're going to take my gospel starting in Jerusalem and it's going to branch on out, spread on out even to the ends of the earth. And we find the apostles doing that very thing, going to preach and people coming and gathering and in a multitude being assembled and gathered. What a great blessing and reminder that the Lord is at work multiplying His people.

He will always multiply them and in doing so will be a wall of fire around them, declares the Lord. I will be the glory in her midst. We'll come to it later. But you see those very words referenced, some of those words referenced, in the book of Revelation. You see, the Lord is intending to do that and will ensure it happens Himself. And not only will He multiply people against perhaps what seems against all odds, times of darkness and trouble and woe and yet He's doing the work. He promised it. He ensures it by Himself.

3. The Lord Guards His People

But the Lord to that end will guard His people. Thirdly, he will guard his people. In verses 6 through 9, look at that for a moment. Verses 6-9, the Lord gathers and protects. He's saying, "Up up, flee from the land of the north, declares the Lord. For I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, declares the Lord. Up, escape to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon." The Lord would would send out His word to come and to return and to escape as it were to Zion, the place of His blessing.

It's a promise that the Lord will gather His people and He will protect them and and guard them, those who come and and flee. And this very terminology that's used, the phrasing that's used, of the New Testament gospel call to repentance to come and to return and to flee from the wrath of God and to get up and escape as it were. And when you do and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He guards and shields and protects.

It's why we love Romans 8 so much. It's not as though Paul made that up. He's getting it from other places. He heard it from his Savior, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. If God is for us, who can be against us? Who is there to condemn? None. The Lord is our righteousness. He has forgiven us our sins. He holds us and guards His people and protects us.

You see the way He describes His people as the apple of His eye. That word “apple” is something like the word for pupil. And it's the most sensitive part of the body and you protect it. You naturally blink your eyes when something is seeking to to harm it. And you kind of get that idea of the instinctiveness of that and the preciousness of the pupil. And the Lord is saying something like that. That's what His people are to Him, like the apple, the pupil, of His eye, that He will guard and protect at all costs. You will do that. You want to see and you will try to guard that.

You put safety glasses on in certain conditions and doing certain kinds of work and you think about it along those lines. Well, God is more concerned to protect His people, to guard them so that nothing can snatch them from His hand. That's the way He would describe us, those who have put their hope and their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. My Father has them in one hand. I have them in my hand and none can snatch.

And nothing in all this world, neither height nor depth nor anything created in all this world will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. You see those great promises that are here embedded in the Lord's promise to guard and safeguard His people - that whether we live or whether we die, as Paul would say, we belong to the Lord and not even death separates us from Him. We're the apple of His eye. The church belongs to Christ and He will preserve and keep, He will preserve and keep us.

4. The Lord Dwells with His People

Lastly, notice the Lord dwells with His people. It's perhaps the culmination of it all in verses 10 through 13. The Lord is doing all this and delivering and guarding and multiplying, that He might dwell. It's the great promise of the gospel. It's the promise of the Bible, of God dwelling with His people. So that's why there's cause for such joy. Sing and rejoice, Oh daughter of Zion. Verse 10. For behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst. That's His great promise that binds it all together.

It may not look like much. It may it may seem rather weak and unimpressive. Here is the great promise and what we gather and sing about, even now today, and rejoice in. The Lord does dwell in our midst and does so now and will forever. Those great promises. Psalm 16 reminds us that in God's presence there is fullness of joy and pleasures forever more. That's what we have now in Christ. He's going to gather many nations as the gospel goes forth as we've already referred to.

And you see that great objective of the Lord to gather people from all over the place and to dwell in their midst. This worldwide gathering of God's people, this unity in the Lord, so that God might dwell in their midst. It turns everything on its head. There's a sense in which you see that verse 13 is a hush to the nations, a call for the nations to hush as they seem to overwhelm and oppress God's people and to be in charge and in control all the time.

And God is saying, "Hush all that you seek to thwart me dwelling with my people." As you refer to that in the Garden of Eden, seeing what the devil sought to do, to separate God from His people, God says, "I will not be, I will not be separated from my people ever. I will not be thwarted by you, devil, or all the world." Though all of it is unleashed against God and His promises, God has assured us no, He will dwell with us. He's determined to do so.

That's why we find that the wonderful language in the New Testament of Jesus Christ being the word, become flesh and dwelt among us, tabernacled among us, His dwelling. It was pictured in the Old Testament. It's true and fulfilled in Christ, who dwells with His people by His spirit. And the language of 1 Corinthians and Ephesians that we are the temple of God. And it's the culmination of it all. Revelation 21:3, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with Him, and they will be His people."

You see the great promise for you today and tomorrow and forever. God has determined to dwell with you and will let nothing stand in the way of that. He delivers and multiplies and guards His people because He intends to dwell in their midst through Christ Jesus, to whom be praise and glory forever and ever. Amen.