CHAD BAILEY
Midway Presbyterian Church
October 18, 2026 | PM Service

Gracious and Comforting Words

Scripture: Zechariah 1:7–17

Zechariah 1:7 On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, **8** "I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. **9** Then I said, 'What are these, my lord?' The angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' **10** So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.' **11** And they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.' **12** Then the angel of the LORD said, 'O LORD of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?' **13** And the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. **14** So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. **15** And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. **16** Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. **17** Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'"

Introduction

I remember once when I was a carpenter, not really professionally, but worked as a carpenter, and I learned a valuable lesson. I didn't really know what I was doing. We were finishing out rather expensive homes, and I was rather aware of that, and I didn't want to make a mistake. And the boss of the crew recognized that I was working rather painfully slowly, and he could have rightly rebuked me or fussed at me as we say. He could have said those things, and he said rather encouraging words. I was so afraid to mess up and make a mistake. And he essentially said, "Chad, it's okay, we are in the business of fixing things." We all make mistakes, and I've factored in excess wood and materials, and I've calculated the mistakes. In other words, I know about all those things. There was something wonderfully encouraging and comforting that helped me to have a different perspective about things. It wasn't that I was perfect in those days, and working with wood, I certainly made mistakes, but there was a calming effect, an encouraging effect, a comforting effect.

And I wonder if you've experienced such things in your life and all the distresses and discouragements and the difficult things that go on in life at work, at home, and in this world and the disparaging things and how comforting the the word of the Lord can be, speaking exactly to what we need and where we are. We heard that this morning, even the message tonight from Zechariah is much the same as this morning from Paul in Philippians.

And in fact, there is certainly something that Zechariah wants us to see that's going on behind the scenes - a greater reality like we heard this morning. And Zechariah shows us the same thing. These

greater realities of what's really going on. And this cosmic thing going on, set in the backdrop of Genesis 3:15 and showing us what's really going on in the world, what's happening behind all of the troubles and the problems, the difficulties. And yes, Zechariah is speaking to a people who were frustrated and worried perhaps and fearful and doubting and questioning. Had the Lord forgotten them?

They'd come back and everything seemed to be in rubble and ruins and there was opposition constantly to them and to the work that the Lord had called them to do. And they were indeed discouraged. And it is at that point God had spoken words to them. He gave them simple lines, you might say, simple words in the first part of this chapter which we saw last week. They were a call to repentance and turning to the Lord. And it's on the heels of that as we read, that they did turn.

They repented. I believe that in that moment the Lord presses home for them gracious and comforting words, reminders of what we have in the gospel, what the Lord would have pressed upon our hearts and our minds. He gives a series of these eight visions to Zechariah to proclaim to the people. He had spoken simple things and now gives them this vision, this series of visions all at once, all at night, a series of eight visions. This being the first one, to remind God's people of the greater realities that are going on in the world.

What a comfort, the most precious word that is for us as we look out and and see tragic things, difficult things, experiencing them ourselves. The Lord has a word for us. It's much like you find in the books of Ezekiel and Daniel and the book of Revelation, those apocalyptic visions given that were meant to do the same thing that God is doing for his people here in the book of Zechariah - to show a God who knows all and sees all. A God who has made promises and never forgets - ever. It's striking, isn't it?

I know, we can make maybe too much of it, I suppose. But this is very specific, isn't it? It was specific in chapter 1 verse one. But even here perhaps even more specific as we find Zechariah being told that this came to him, this vision, on the 24th day of the 11th month, which is the month of Shabbat, in the second year of Darius.

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah. A very specific timing and date. In Israel's time, they would have kept a calendar according to the kings of Israel and that would have been made clear to them. And here it seems rather devastating that Darius is on the throne. The Persians are ruling and God's people seem to be in ruin and rubble and then the Lord has a word for His people, a most comforting and precious word.

1. The Lord’s Sovereign Presence with His People

And you see it first of all, I think in these first few verses, the Lord's sovereign presence with His people, His sovereign presence is a gracious and comforting word indeed. These are perhaps strange things to us.

And I suppose it's rather comforting, that as Zechariah is shown this vision, he himself asks, "What are these, Lord?" He didn't know. He needed to ask himself. They were rather confusing and needed to be explained to him. And I know there are question marks surrounding these verses. And perhaps if you've read through them yourself, you come away a little bit puzzled, and people sometimes wonder why in the world would you preach through Zechariah? And yes, there are difficult things here, but it's one of the most hopeful books in the Old Testament. It's meant as a word of encouragement and hope.

Much like the book of Revelation is meant to do that with all the things that perhaps wow, and we wonder at some of the particulars. The message is quite clear - to strengthen and encourage God's people. And what is more encouraging than to know that the Lord is with us? The Lord is present with His people always. You see that in verse eight. That's essentially what's being said here. I saw in the night and behold, a man riding on a red horse.

Now, that word “red” could possibly mean something like chestnut brown or something. And there are different shades, it seems like going from some kind of maybe darker brown to lighter brown to white. And I don't think there's much in it except distinguishing maybe the riders, but it's certainly very vivid for Zechariah, of expressing something of the Lord's presence. This man on this horse, this red horse or chestnut brown horse, is identified later as the angel of the Lord in verse 11.

They answered the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtles. This word for angel also means messenger and I suppose there's been a great debate over whether this is a pre-incarnate vision of Christ. Is this Christ appearing before He's come in the flesh? And that seems to be the prevailing thought. This angel of the Lord or messenger of the Lord shows up throughout the Old Testament. He was the one who stayed Abraham's hand when he was about to sacrifice Isaac at the Lord's command. He was the one who spoke to Moses at the burning bush.

And it seems this angel of the Lord, messenger of the Lord, is constantly present in those great times of redemption and proclamation of that message. And certainly, it seems that this is the case here. And here he is standing among the myrtle trees in the glen. It it's perhaps a bit of a puzzling picture. There are a couple of places in the Old Testament where myrtles are mentioned. In Isaiah 41, the Lord promises to plant myrtles in the wilderness.

These were green shrubs. There weren't, I suppose, something super impressive about them, but evergreen trees or shrubs are associated in the Old Testament with restoration and blessing, as in Isaiah 41:19 and again in Isaiah 55:13. The myrtle replaces the brier, the thorn. It's a picture of a great reversal and God's blessing in the midst of a wilderness, in a place of curse. This phrase there that these myrtle trees were in the glen, that phrase “in the glen” is actually a word in this passage and again it's difficult, I understand, but elsewhere in scripture it could be translated as “the depths”, as in the depths of the sea and waters. It is the same word that's used where the Egyptians were drowned and into the depths.

In various places in the Old Testament, this same word is used to talk about the depths or the deep. And it's this picture of this man, this angel of the Lord standing among the myrtles in the glen or in the depths, in the deep, a picture of the Lord Himself bringing blessing from curse and controlling what would often be representative of chaos and danger - of the depths of the sea and death and all of that. And here is the Lord, who is seemingly standing calmly over it all. The Lord is present amongst His people in the midst of great calamity to bring blessings out of curse - to bring calm.

He's always with His people. That is what Zechariah is being shown here in an authoritative way as well, knowing all things. It's a constant reminder that the Lord is with His people, and we are told God is with us. We are to believe Him. That's what the Lord would say to His disciples in the upper room. Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. I would remind him of going to prepare a place for them that they might always be with Him. And that constant reminder is found throughout the Bible - of the Lord present with His people.

We find the great promise and truth of the Lord tabernacling amongst us in John 1 and God always being with us. The Lord Jesus making that very declaration. I am with you always to the end of the age. He says believe He's come in fact to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found, as we

sing sometimes. And the Lord's presence is meant to be a word of grace and comfort to us, a great source of encouragement that He is with us.

You remember the Apostle Paul needing the Lord and His presence and was reminded by Jesus as He appeared to Paul in a time of great discouragement in Corinth. And as he was going about, the Lord appeared to him at his side telling him to press on. He was with him. It is the same for us. And do you notice there's a sense of authority that comes with that presence in verses 9 through 10. These other horsemen there and their various array of colors, verses 9 and 10. They are patrolling the earth.

They are sent out by the Lord. In verse 10, sent to patrol the earth. It's a description of this idea of them being on horses that would no doubt impress upon them the idea of a warrior. We think of horses in an agricultural sense, working piece of land. No, they were descriptive of war and the Lord of hosts being in charge, authoritative. This angel of the Lord in fact, standing and the other horses coming back and reporting to this angel of the Lord as a reminder of the fact that the Lord is sovereign over everything - ruling and reigning on behalf of His people.

He knows what's going on. He has complete knowledge. He has no need, the Lord doesn't need people to inform Him of anything. He knows everything. It's a picture for God's people to see. Look how the Lord is sovereign and in control and He goes out and sees everything everywhere, all the time. These horsemen come back reporting perhaps what would be disturbing news to see, the earth remaining at rest. At first that doesn't seem very bad, but here's the whole earth at at ease.

It's a description of them not thinking about God, not living for God and all those ways of being at enmity with God. In fact, here's the one who knows all of that and sees all of that. In the Persian Empire, they would have a vast system of sending out reconnaissance teams, you might say, and people reporting. And there's a system, a network for gaining knowledge and keeping track of what's going on throughout the empire. That doesn't perhaps seem that impressive to us anymore. We have the world almost at our fingertips with the internet and all that you can do even through a watch.

But you think about the ways in which our own military work and send out surveillance and reconnaissance missions and gathering intel on the enemy and all their activities. And we in some ways take comfort in that, knowing that our military has great knowledge of the enemy, knows their movements.

I remember reading with great wonder when our military forces went in against both Saddam Hussein and later Bin Laden. And to read the reports of the fact that the enemy had no idea that someone had been plotting and planning and watching and knew their every move, knew where they were going to be, exactly where they were going to be. And that's just a small little snippet, isn't it? And God knows to a greater degree, doesn't He? Everything, every detail, everywhere, all the time. And that's the picture being given here.

The Lord is present in that way, in a sovereign, almighty, all- knowing, omnipotent way and for His people. Nothing lies outside His authority. Nothing escapes His knowledge. He's not some distant spectator of history. He knows the circumstances of His people. Even when providence is hard, God governs history in the whole world for the sake of His people. It's seen in that very passage in Ephesians 1 where Paul says that Christ is given as head over all things to the church. Head over all things to the church. He's head over all things to the church and for the church, ruling and governing sovereignly.

This is not some cold theological abstraction. It's for us, for every day, that the Lord knows His people. He knows where they are. He knows what they go through. And He says, "I am with you."

It's why we love Psalm 23. And it's it's a reminder, isn't it, that the Lord doesn't navigate us around the valley of the shadow of death. He's with us through it, in the midst of it, in the midst of hard things, trying things. What a glorious thought. Isn't that the way that the gospel encourages us as Christ even prayed in John 17 that we would be with Him wherever He is?

He is with His people and wants them there with Him to see His glory. He will make it happen and His zeal will do it.

2. The Lord's Jealous Love

You see the second thing here, the Lord's jealous love. Verses 12-15. This angel of the Lord interceding as it were, pleading for mercy upon Jerusalem. This is why people would say this surely seems to be a manifestation of the Son of God before His incarnation, as He's praying and pleading to the Lord of hosts on behalf of His people for mercy.

Surely we see that in the New Testament as a reference to Christ. As Paul will glory in that great truth in Romans 8:34 - that Christ is indeed interceding for us. Now in Hebrews 7:25, He always lives to make intercession. John would say it again in 1 John 2, we have an advocate with the Father. He's pleading and always interceding. We are not forgotten before the Lord. You say that's perhaps the people of God. We're prone to think that. Has the Lord left us in ruin and rubble and left us here to die? Has he forgotten us? No. He never has. He never will.

He's not only with His people. There's a a zeal and a love and seeing the Lord respond to the prayer of this angel of the Lord, who seems to be the Lord Jesus Himself manifesting Himself in this way, praying for His people. And there's a response to that in verse 13. The Lord answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me, this other angel, this interpreting angel. And what did he say? I want you to cry out, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease."

For while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. All was not as it seemed, perhaps as the nations seemed to go on living in ease. Isn't that the way that Asaph describes it in Psalm 73? Look out and the wicked seem to have no problems. Everything seems to be smooth sailing for them. No troubles at all. And Zechariah is given this vision and this word from the Lord to say not all is as it seems. These are gracious and comforting words meant to reassure God's people in times of discouragement, that He is exceedingly jealous for His people.

It's the same word, that word for jealous. We need not think of maybe jealousy as we often think of it - sinfully. It's not sinful envy or insecurity or selfish possessiveness in a sinful way, but it's God's holy zeal for His own glory and His covenant relationship with His people. J.I. Packer described it this way. It's a zeal to protect a love relationship or avenge it when it is broken. He's chosen Jerusalem and bound Himself to His people by covenant. He will not abandon them or surrender His purposes for them. It's that great covenant love though the word is not used here.

It is that idea of His binding Himself to His people by the Lord Jesus, as we even read earlier in Hebrews 6, reminding us of God's great guarantee to His people. He swore by Himself and it's in blood, the blood of His Son. A love we might say that will never let us go. So it's why we love Romans 8, the ending of Romans 8, that we can never ever be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Never. God is described in that kind of way.

Jealous in that way for His people whom He loves dearly as His own, the apple of His eye, His bride as she's described, as the church is described, dear, near to His heart, having given His own Son for them. And you see the flip side of that. He's exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease. He

is not simply letting people get away with anything as we sometimes think of it. That's perhaps what they were thinking. Why are you letting us have all this trouble?

We're trying to rebuild the temple and build the city wall, and we keep getting harassed and hounded by opposition constantly. Do you do you not love us? And the Lord says, "Yes, of course I do. I've never stopped." He's demonstrated it, hasn't He? He's demonstrated it certainly in the Lord Jesus. And this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He's demonstrated that love for us in Christ Jesus. And so, we dare not look to circumstances and trouble and trial and heartache and ask based upon that, “Does God love me?”

It's not that, He tells us so. It's what He's done for us in the Lord Jesus. He is jealous for His people. Will never let them go. So, nothing will come between Him and His people. He has guaranteed it in the blood of His Son.

3. The Lord’s Assured Restoration for His People

That leads to the last thing we see in the text. The Lord's assured restoration for His people. There are these, this overflowing message of gracious words and comforting words. You see, He says in verses 16 and 17, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy.

Aren't we reminded of that very truth as we read in the pages of the New Testament of the Lord's great mercy towards us in Christ Jesus? We were not saved because we were so great and wonderful and good-looking and smart and righteous, but because of His mercy, His great mercy that He's shown to us. And He's reiterating that. Do you see the mercy that He has and the great truths of His promised restoration for His people? My house shall be built in it, declares the Lord of hosts. And the measuring line shall be stretched over Jerusalem.

It might not look like it, and things seemed to be in rubble and ruin, and everything seemed to be perhaps falling apart, nothing going right. And the Lord's saying, "Don't trust that. You trust my promise. I will restore.” His house will be built. His temple will be restored. And He wasn't pointing by the way, we know for a fact that later on in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, those things were finished. And yet the temple would be destroyed again. And what Zechariah is being shown is not about brick and mortar.

It's God's great promise in His Son that the church will prevail. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. He will build His church. And He's comforting His people with that very truth, the promise of the gospel, these things being ultimately fulfilled in Christ, the fortunes of God's people will be reversed. There will be a great restoration. That's why we love the idea and the thought, we talk about it all the time, that because we are in Christ, those who are in Christ are new creatures, we say, but part of, as the text says, we are part of the new creation.

God is making all things new and He's starting with His people. He's changing us. He's doing a work already and He would have us see things unseen. That's what the Lord is doing. Preparing for us a better place, preparing us as a bride of Christ. Don't you love it? It culminates in Christ. It's begun here below and He is doing that work. The gospel is going forth. He is certainly causing it to overflow. Even that language that he uses in verse 17 of overflowing with prosperity and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.

It is a pointer to that great day that's already begun now of the gospel going forth and nations being saved and that time when in Revelation 21 and 22 we get that picture of Jerusalem as the bride coming down, God's great dwelling place with man His people, His bloodbought people, the blood

of Christ. He who spared not His own Son, how will He not with Him also give us all things. That's what he's saying to God's people. The Lord is sovereignly present with His people. And He loves, He loves you in Christ.

He has declared that and shown that, demonstrated it, and will never turn back and never turn away. And He will complete that good work that He began. He will restore. These are gracious and comforting words that are as sure today as they were in the days of Zechariah. Let us not grow weary and faint-hearted, not lose heart, but trust the Lord whose promises are sure.