

December 23 – Annie Shank

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice in Hope!

Some background: Today's reading follows Jerusalem's return after the Babylonian exile. Although the Israelites have returned, they're struggling with unfulfilled expectations.

Tomorrow is Christmas Eve-- two days from Christmas! Naturally, we might expect a gospel reading about Jesus. Instead, we have an Old Testament reading encouraging Jerusalem to have hope. HOPE-- there's a word we hear often during advent. Perhaps the reading ties in to Christmas after all!

Notice the prophet uses a term of endearment addressing the Israelites, echoing Zephaniah [3:14-16](#), "Daughter of Zion/Jerusalem." Both bring messages of reconciliation, healing and hope. Why do the Israelites have cause to rejoice? Zechariah promises their King is coming to them. The King is the Messiah: Jesus. Matthew [2:15](#) and John [12:15](#) both refer to Zechariah 9:9 as they tell the story of Jesus preparing to ride into Jerusalem on a Donkey.

Why a donkey? Why not a horse? A visual of Jesus riding a donkey might seem almost humorous, whereas riding a horse... well, that's majestic! But, in the first century a horse was a symbol of war, so a conquering king would enter a city riding a horse, but a king coming in peace would ride in on a donkey. Jesus came in peace.



A colt signifies the donkey was never ridden before. Kings rode horses or donkeys ridden by no-one else. By riding a donkey colt, Jesus is signifying he is King and coming in peace. Our King comes, and he comes in peace! This is surely a great cause for rejoicing!

*Merciful and Loving Father, we give thanks for your unfailing love, grace and presence. May we bring honor to Your name, continuing in your example of love, peace and grace.*

Today, look for God's loving presence in your life, and rejoice!

Annie