**Don’t Get Too Comfortable**

**Zechariah 1:7-2:13 (ESV)**

October 3, 2021

Pastor Josh Beakley

God has spoken many times and in many ways. One of the ways is through the prophets, back in the time of, you might say, the dark ages, the Minor Prophets, the book of Zechariah. It’s a little read book, and yet there are some gems within that we will learn about our great Savior. There are some words that He would have to speak to us. We’re starting our series called *Return to Hope*. Does anybody feel like they could use some hope these days? Well, we’re ready for it. It will be quite a read, so if you need to sit down, do not be ashamed at all. We are reading chapter 1 verse 7, all the way through chapter 2 of the book of Zechariah.

***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.’”*

***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.”*

**Chapter 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.*

Have you ever heard of combat fatigue? I was reading about it. Apparently in World War II, there were over half a million troops that suffered a breaking point of what some called “psychiatric collapse” and marked men that were unfit for combat. It was said that more than any previous war that there had been people suffering from this combat fatigue because of how long the battles lasted and the fighting continued. One number claimed that over all, there were over a million soldiers, sailors, and airmen who were treated for combat fatigue and that were overwhelmed by this unending sense of battle without escape. Sometimes it would result in panic, but other times it would be this distant, what is called a 2,000 yard stare. It’s just resignation, being overwhelmed, even settling in, and sometimes even giving in or getting comfortable in the trench with this loss of hope or any deliverance or end.

I don’t want to belittle the challenges of true war, but the fatiguing impact of hardship and the stresses of life can sometimes be like that, can’t they? Do you ever feel like you are tired of fighting? You are just resigned. You just feel defeated, fatigued. You look back at your week and you kind of feel like, “I just have settled in. I’m giving up. I kind of have forgotten what I’m fighting for.” Or even, “I just feel like, what is the use? It doesn’t feel like I’m making any progress. I feel stuck. I feel like there is no hope. I feel actually, forgotten, and not just by people. I feel forgotten by God.” Do you know you can feel alone and forgotten? Yes, that can happen online. It can happen when you’re isolated. It can happen though, when you’re sitting with a bunch of other people. You feel not only forgotten by others, but by God.

Israel is tired. They are struggling against feeling defeated, against being weary, against being fatigued, of settling in and getting comfortable with just the status quo. They’re saying, “What the use?” They feel forgotten by God. They had had this brief revival that was pretty amazing, really. They had a revival where they started a building program. They were going to build the temple. It was a building program that actually was sovereignly ordained, amazingly as a fulfillment of prophecy. They had been exiled and sent back and they saw God was at work and they were building this temple, but it was hard and there was a lot of opposition. It felt like they were kind of doing it on their own sometimes. There were so many enemies and so much frustration. There was opposition on the outside and a difference within. They started to slack off.

After about sixteen years, a couple prophets start to speak. Haggai and Zechariah are giving some prophecies and the temple work begins to resume. Haggai gets it going. There is this revival. Zechariah comes along to help people keep moving. When you feel just wearied and fatigued, maybe like you’ve been forgotten and like there isn’t hope, there is. Here comes Zechariah. There is a difficulty with the motivation to rebuild the temple because here’s what is going on.

The God who created the world has chosen a way to express His love and save this world. He has chosen a family through the seed of Abraham. Just like God promised with the first man and woman, God promised Abraham that there would come a Seed who would come and save His people. That would happen through this particular family, the line of Abraham. Through him, all the nations of the earth would be blessed and this family would continue. There was this war that Satan, God’s enemy, would stir up against his own people. So here is Abraham that moves down through Isaac and Jacob and this nation of Israel. God leads this nation of Israel into Egypt. They are oppressed, but God saves them in a mighty way and sets them apart as His people. He says, “If you follow me, it will be good. You’ll be blessed. But if you disobey and dishonor and reject my Word, I promise, you will be disciplined. You will be scattered. No longer will you have this land, this place that I have promised where you will be blessed. You’re going to be scattered.” God kept His promise!

Israel disobeyed. They rejected Him time and time again, and they were scattered, exiled. In that exile, there was discouragement, loneliness. These dark ages is when we find the Minor Prophets speaking. But God, in the warning right before the exile, Jeremiah had said, “You’re going into exile, but God promises it will be for seventy years.” He spoke a historical fact. “Seventy years and you’ll come back.” In fact, after seventy years there is a proclamation. Cyrus sent them back. 50,000 Jews moved back and there was a revival. It’s amazing! We’re trying to get it started, and yet, something is missing and there is just a delay. Haggai is trying to cheer them on to keep going and Zechariah comes along. They’re thinking, “We’ve forgotten. Is this really the best that is? We’re just tired.” Here’s Zechariah coming to both afflict the comfortable, but also comfort the afflicted and saying, “Look ahead!”

There is a question about whether there is hope. What hope does God give when fatigue tempts us to settle? Here’s a thought for today. Just because we’ve forgotten what God is doing, doesn’t mean He has. In fact, Yahweh never forgets. Or you could say it like this. He remembers! Wouldn’t it be just like Yahweh to choose a prophet to communicate that message whose very name means “Yahweh remembers”? Zechar is the Hebrew word “remember.” Yah, that Zechar-iah, that’s the ending for Yahweh. “Yahweh remembers!” He never forgets, even when we do. He wants us to have hope looking ahead and knowing that God sees what is behind and ahead to give us hope in the midst of the battle we’re in. He gives us some reminders to stir up that hope that He never forgets, that He always remembers. We’ll try to look at four this morning. The first is a reminder about

**The Awareness He Enjoys (1:7-11)**

He knows what is going on. He knows what is happening. He’s aware. He’s fully aware. You see that in verses 7-11. He sees. He knows. He perceives. He is aware. One of those illustrations that I think about is the president. He has a thing called a PDB, the President’s Daily Brief. It was invented a few presidencies ago, where all the top secret different intelligence agencies would come together and they would make this little briefing, a paper or two or whatever it would be. It is something he is handed first thing in the morning. Here’s what is going on. It has all the resources, everything, and here is what is going on. It’s a pretty important packet.

Now, for all of the resources that our nation would have to kind of have an understanding of what’s going on around the world, it is nothing compared to the awareness that God has at any given moment, of what’s going on. We see a picture of what that looks like, where God is reminding, “I know. I’m completely aware of exactly what’s going on. I haven’t forgotten, even if it seems like I have.” Look at what God knows. He knows exactly when to act. These people are discouraged. He knows exactly when to act.

***7*** *On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius,*

This is three months after Zechariah’s initial oracle. This date is five months after the work to rebuild the temple had started. It’s towards the end of the year. It could be that towards the end of the year and as you start a new year, there might be some ideas about a new ruler, a new king. We think about that idea of how sequences in the year move towards new rulers or a change in leadership. It’s possible that this was sort of moving towards that. Here is a specific day, the twenty-fourth, which the twenty-fourth is when it started back in Haggai 1:15. So it’s a significant day. Here’s when God chooses to act. In fact, He acts on this night. The next six chapters are all about one night, what takes place on this very night. There are eight visions that will come to Zechariah this night. God knows exactly when He wants to act and through whom He is going to work.

*the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo,*

Like I said, Zechariah’s name means “Yahweh remembers.” His heritage of his family is mentioned several times in Ezra chapter 5, Nehemiah chapter 12, Matthew 23. We see that his father was Berechiah and his grandfather was Iddo. Iddo can either mean “his witness” or “the appointed time.” Berechiah means “Yahweh blesses.” God remembers, He blesses, His witness or at the appointed time. Here’s the sense that we see even embedded in the name. There is something God is doing right when He wants to. He also knows exactly how to speak. The Word of Yahweh came through what Zechariah sees in the night.

*saying,* ***8*** *“I saw in the night,*

It’s a vision. This is how God chooses to speak. He speaks through a vision. Like I said, Hebrews tells us

**Hebrews 1:1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets

This is one of those many ways. He spoke through visions. It’s not super familiar to us, so we have to think about it for a moment. Visions are not necessarily being asleep. It’s like they would have been saying, “I had a dream” or “I was asleep.” There are other ways that God speaks through dreams. But, here it’s through a vision. It’s sort of like a sixth sense. It’s seeing something that you wouldn’t normally be able to see. He is perceiving a reality that isn’t usually perceptible to our realm. It’s something that is happening supernaturally. He’s seeing these and they’re operating as pictures or windows into something that we wouldn’t normally see.

Now, one book reminded me of Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. Do you remember that, with Ebenezer Scrooge? As a reminder, there is one night and then there are these visions of Christmas past, present and future and it kind of moves throughout. It’s one night, but a lot is going on. There are lots of movies that will have dream sequences or vision type sequences. If you watch one of those with your kids, they’re like “What’s going on? What’s this? Is this happening?” Well, no, not really. Didn’t you see how the whole screen went fuzzy? Now, we’re in a different realm. This is a different thing. It’s sometimes symbolic. Also, people will be talking in one place and then he’s over here, farther away. They’re like, “Oh, can that guy transport?” No, it’s a vision thing. But it’s communicating something that you wouldn’t normally be able to feel, in a very tangible way. God knows when and how and why He wants to speak, and it’s through this way. When people are feeling wearied and discouraged, He chooses a specific day, specific person and a specific night and He is going to give a sequence of visions that we’re going to be in for the next couple of weeks. There are eight in particular.

These visions have symbols. We tend to think that symbols are old and archaic and irrelevant. We think, “We don’t do symbols. That’s kind of superstitious.” But we have symbols all over the place. We have icons and we have all kinds of graphic designers. There are a lot of symbols. When you pull up our currency you might think, “Wait a second! What’s all this? Somebody crazy made this thing.” There are symbols all over the place. So we would be remiss if we just sort of jumped over the fact that symbols have meaning. Someone put them there. God wants to say something.

The other thought about visions is Zechariah is being given a window into something he wouldn’t normally see, and part of that is the future. Normally, we don’t see the future. If you’re like me, we don’t see what’s going to happen. Now, God does. To a people who are discouraged and feeling like this is never going to end, God gives them something very kind. He gives them a vision into the future. He has given them the promise. He has told them what will happen, but He gives Zechariah a moment to see, so that there is hope. He sees a vision into the future. Whenever you have someone looking at the future, there is a challenge because of perspective.

When you go hiking and you go to mountain ranges, which there aren’t very many mountain ranges as far as I am aware in the Midwest, but when you go to mountain ranges, you can look out and you start to see the mountains and you can see several layers of mountains. They look like they’re right on top of each other. In fact, it looks like maybe there are three and maybe they’re right on top of each other. If you were to go hiking and you’re taking your kids, they’re like, “Oh, this is really long. I’m tired. How many mountains?” Well, there are three. There is this, this, and this. “Okay, cool.” You get to the top of one mountain and you realize there is actually a valley and then five little mountains in between, and then the next mountain. I think we’re going back for lunch. You can’t see what is going on, but from your perspective, this is how it appears. It’s not inaccurate. It’s just that you are limited in how you see what is ahead.

Here’s what happens whenever we look at prophecy. We have to recognize that there is a telescope effect where you are looking. Things can appear right on top of each other, immediately next to each other, even if they’re separated by hundreds of miles or hundreds of years, you could say. Because where you’re at, you’re trying to see. You’re trying to look. You’re trying to describe what you see and you’re trying to paint a picture and sometimes it’s difficult to paint what is really 3D. So here’s what is happening in the vision, and it makes prophecy difficult. What we have to do is recognize the people who received prophecy, when they received it, what they understood from the past and what they were looking ahead to. We have to recognize the message they were supposed to receive at that time and then continue to move our way through biblical history. It does get quite complex.

So here are the visions we’re looking at. The vision is sort of this repeated montage of eight visions happening in one night. Many of them are very simple, but they have a profound point. God knows when to speak. He knows who to talk to, how to work. He knows how He wants to speak and He knows what He wants to convey. Here’s what He wants to convey, what He wants to share or communicate. I’ll say it like this. “Just because I seem oblivious, it doesn’t mean I don’t know everything that is going on.” He is fully aware and He communicates that through a powerful scene and then a pointed summary at the end. So, here’s the scene. Here’s vision #1. Zechariah looks up and the scene is both mysterious and meaningful, but it starts out mysterious.

*and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen,*

So it’s somewhat mysterious, but also meaningful. What does riding a horse mean? Well, riding a horse would have very clearly indicated someone with royal wealth, someone with power, someone who is in charge. It may be a king, a ruler. It often represented war. It is a symbol for war, like a tank might be. These were how you went into battle. So here is a man on a red horse. Red is the same word used for Esau having red hair. So it’s not red in a strange sense. This idea would be that this is likely representing war or bloodshed. It’s something that shows He means business. There is a mystery. Who is this man?

We’re told, if you read ahead. Here’s some of the confusion of the vision. How many angels are here? What’s going on? Who is talking? It seems to be that the one standing in the midst of the myrtle trees is this man. We’re told in verse 12 that it seems as if it’s the angel of Yahweh. It’s a specific angel. It appears that there is an angel talking to him, an interpreting angel, explaining. Then there is also this angel of Yahweh, who is also referred to as a man riding on a horse.

Now, when you hear “angel of Yahweh,” it’s a very specific term that references this angel that had been with God’s people specifically at key moments throughout history, intervening, defending, but also disciplining, judging at very powerful and profound times. You see there is something unique about him, something special. In fact, this special appearance of this angel hadn’t occurred for probably two hundred years. So here we are. We’ve been in exile. We’re coming back and all of a sudden, right away, Zechariah sees the angel of Yahweh. He’s back! What’s going on? What is the mystery and the meaning? He’s back and he means business.

Now, he is standing among the myrtle trees in the glen. If you’re anything like me, you’re thinking, what is a myrtle tree? Does that mean anything? A myrtle tree might not mean a lot to us. It would have been meaningful to the Israelites. Maybe think of it like this. If you’re looking through the bookstore and you’re kind of looking at the book covers and trying to decide to find a fun book to read, or maybe you’re scrolling through whatever movies and you’re looking at Hallmark movies, let’s say, and you see on the cover a pine tree, what do you think? This is a Christmas movie. Some of you might be like, “Well, this is great! I love it!” Others of you are like, “I do not watch Christmas movies; maybe in December, or maybe never.” But you see that pine tree and you know what that is.

Now, here’s Israel. What would they think when they saw a myrtle tree. It’s a common tree. It’s more like a bush. I was told after the first service by someone who knows more about plants than me, that it’s sort of like the honeysuckle, if you’re familiar with that. It’s a bush that can grow quite high, but it typically is six feet, maybe eight feet, if it’s down in a low area with lots of light and then water coming in all over the place. It would be an evergreen. It would be pretty perpetually green. It’s not typically beautiful, but sometimes there would be some white flowers that would come out from it. It would have a nice fragrance, but the fragrance would typically only come when you would crush it. So here are these bushes. They’re not super impressive, but they are common in Israel. There was a holiday that they would conjure to mind. Myrtle branches on these trees were part of the material that the Israelites would use to build their booths at the Feast of Tabernacles.

When Israel was delivered out, they traveled and God showed, “I am in your midst.” They had a tabernacle to show God was in their midst. They would build their little structures and remember that God is with us even as we pilgrimage and travel. We’re out here in the middle of nowhere, but God is with us, protecting us. So they would constantly remember that through a Feast of Tabernacles, building these booths with the myrtle trees. Any time you think of a myrtle tree, think of it as just like pine tree goes with Christmas, myrtle tree goes with Feast of Tabernacles. God is with us in our pilgrimage.

In fact, these myrtle trees would be symbolism that would be pulled from another prophet, Isaiah. Isaiah 41:19 and Isaiah 55:13, record these times where God is saying there is going to be a special time. Instead of the briar or the thornbush, there is going to be the myrtle. Some of that seems sort of subtle, but it is also very precious in God’s sight. It’s not big and stately like a cedar, but it’s this subtle, precious representation. It’s like, I think, the people of Israel. God’s chosen people are here. They’re outside Jerusalem, down in this glen in a ravine, kind of obscured, but the whole idea is that this angel of Yahweh is with them. He’s right in their midst.

In fact, when you think about the word for myrtle, do you know where else we find that word? It’s as a name. Who was named after that? I heard it whispered. Esther. It’s the Hebrew word Hadassah. Here you have where you’re in a foreign kingdom in a book where you never hear the name of Yahweh mentioned, and yet, here is this beautiful obscured myrtle, showing God at work in their midst even amidst exile. Here’s what is going on. There is a lot of imagery that we can catch through Yahweh and we’re in the midst of the myrtle trees. But he’s not alone. There are some other horses there.

*and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.*

Sorrel is sort of a speckled brown. It could be a mixture of the red and white. I think what we’re looking at is the red again, being the sign of combat, warfare, bloodshed. Then the white is the sign of victory, triumph, and conquering, like the Romans would come in on the white horse to show that they were in charge. Then this speckled brown is sort of a mixture. So here is the spectrum of what is going on in the world. There are these horses, and it may not just be three. It may be troops of horses, and it’s likely that just like the angel of Yahweh is on the one, there are likely angels on these others. So when Zechariah sees these horses and the glen and they’re showing up, what’s going on? It seems like there is a commotion. Something is happening.

***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.’*

Here they come in for not the president’s daily briefing, but here’s the briefing of all the things going on. We just did our rounds. The Persian Empire would have been known for skilled horsemen. They go, they travel, they spy, they bring it back and here’s the news. You hear those hooves stomping and you know they mean business. We know what’s going on. Here’s Zechariah, but it’s like we’re here in the glen outside Jerusalem and this is the angel of Yahweh. This is like our guys. This is us! I know Persia. They’ve been out. But our guys, they have news?

We’ve known from Job chapters 1 and 2 that the devil, he prowls around. He is roaming the earth. There are evil angels at work, demons that are moving, and yet we’re reminded that God has His own angels out moving about and roaming. In fact, if you look at Zechariah 1:3 he repeats three times this is the LORD of hosts. He’s the one with lots of armies. Persia seems like they’re in charge. Others seem like they have all the people. But Yahweh is like, “I have my people.” Zechariah is like, “This is our team. These are our guys. They’re doing. They’re working. God hasn’t forgotten us.” In fact, He’s aware of everything.

Now, what’s the report? What do they come back and say. Here is the summary. That’s the scene. Here’s the summary. The summary seems like everything is at a standstill. All forward progress has stopped. We’re stuck. We’re at a halt. It seems like God stopped advancing His plan. Look at what it says.

***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.’*

This isn’t a good thing. If you’re being oppressed by enemy people that are not supposed to be in charge and you’re supposed to be leading the way for a king that is going to bring righteousness, to have evil rulers all at their ease, at their leisure, is not a good thing. If you look back at Haggai, the book right before this, it’s probably on the next page. Look back at Haggai.

**Haggai 2:21** “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth,

God is the LORD of hosts. He’s the commander. He says

**Haggai 2:22** and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.

He says, “I’m going to shake things up!” Here, the angel says nothing has been shaken up. It’s all calm. The idea is that Yahweh knows exactly what is going on. In fact, we could call this section “nowhere to hide.” There is nowhere to hide. God knows all, even when it seems like He has no idea. Even when it seems like He’s been gone or like He has forgotten, He sees it all far more precisely than we would ever think. He is the God of Zechariah, the God who remembers. Even if we forget, He never does. There are things going on that we don’t see. The idea is things are on the move. Don’t get too comfortable. God hasn’t forgotten. It’s about to get crazy. We cannot hide from God. He sees all things.

We see the angel of the Lord is the one who intercedes and sees Hagar out there on her own and speaks to her. He’s the God who, when Abraham is about to strike Isaac, thinking, “I don’t know if God is here. I trust,” and God calls out. He sees exactly what is going on. He knows. He speaks. There is a ram in the thicket. He’s the one who comes and who speaks to Moses. He’s the one who intercedes and defends His people. This is the angel of Yahweh, who I believe it starts to unfold and we’ll see where it goes in the book. I don’t want to get too far ahead of ourselves, but I think we see this is the one who fulfills the call of God with us, the with us God. This is the one who would one day stand amidst the lampstands of the churches. This is the one who doesn’t have a different message than we heard last week. He’s the one who calls, “Repent!” He’s the one who says, “Don’t forget! I am on my way. I am coming quickly,” the very end of Scripture says. Don’t get too comfortable!

Have you ever lost motivation to follow God because you felt forgotten? You felt like He doesn’t know what is going on. He doesn’t see what I’m thinking. He doesn’t see what my spouse is thinking, what my kids have done. He doesn’t see what my co-workers are doing, what my boss is doing. He doesn’t see what is going on across the world. He doesn’t see the plight of the nations. He doesn’t see what is happening in our church. We’re trying to do our part. We’re working, but He isn’t doing His part. He’s forgotten. But God says, “No, I haven’t! I have full awareness. I see you even now. I remember.” There is hope in that. But that hope is built not only in God’s awareness, it’s built on His faithfulness.

**The Faithfulness He Maintains (1:12-17)**

The angel of Yahweh speaks up in this moment. The earth is at rest. It’s at ease, and that gets him going.

***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?’*

He’s saying, “How can this be? The time is up. It’s time to have mercy for your people.”

***13*** *And the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me.*

There is something interesting. The angel of Yahweh is speaking to Yahweh of hosts. How does this work? It’s a mystery that will unfold over time, but what happens is there are gracious and comforting words. These words relate to the faithfulness of God, that He cares. He is true and steadfast in His loyal love. He cares. Even though there has been a time of discipline, He cares. God doesn’t stop being a Father to His children just because He is teaching them a lesson. They are His and He loves them with a deep faithfulness and care. You see the care through first, His care about His promise. He’s the one who brings it up. Zechariah doesn’t have to cry out. The report comes in that the nation is at ease. The angel of Yahweh says, “How long?” This angel of Yahweh intercedes. “How long, God? You made a promise. Seventy years.” Look at the nature of this promise. He says, “How long will you have no mercy?” This is about mercy. He’s interceding for mercy for the people of God. The recipients are

*Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry*

You’ve been disciplining them. You promised that you would, but you also promised that you would give mercy. You promised through Jeremiah 29. Go back and look. He said in seventy years, you’ll be out. But then you said

**Jeremiah 29:11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

“God, you made a promise. The mercy should be on the way. The seventy years are up.” You see the certainty of the promise and by whom the guarantee comes. Yahweh answered. He’s all about the promise. He cares about the promise and the promise shows He cares about His people. You see their hope for a future.

***13*** *And the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me.*

You see what unfolds here is they are placed in his heart. The angel says to Zechariah,

***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.*

“I’m very jealous with a great jealousy! These people are mine. They belong to me.” This is not a sinful human jealousy. It’s a jealousy that is holy and divine. It’s God’s love and zeal. One writer would say that it’s a two-sided word. It’s a deep love that when anything threatens that love, like you love your wife or you love your children, anything that would hurt or harm them, you hate that thing. It’s a zeal, a full belonging and commitment of steadfast love. This is God’s committed zealous love. The word zeal even has this idea of red, of boiling, that it’s just this all out passion for what He loves.

It’s part of His Name, we’re told in Exodus chapter 20. That’s why He can’t stand or abhors or hates any other idols or false or fake gods. He says, “I am your God. You be my people. We belong to each other. I love you. I’m very jealous.” The kind of jealousy He has for His people you see even in James 4:5. He is jealous for His people and that jealousy burns like a fire. Sometimes the jealousy burns, you see when the people disobey and they go after other gods like idolatry. You see that in James 4. God’s jealousy burns in discipline for His people. But then when His people are threatened and harmed, it burns in jealous protection and defense of His people. In that sense, He is here saying, “Those are my people. You mess with them, you mess with me.” Here is God.

***15*** *And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease;*

“Because of their place in my heart and their plight in the world, I am angry with the nations.

*for while I was angry but a little,*

I had a distinct reason and purpose for my anger and discipline. But while I was angry but a little,

*they furthered the disaster.*

They took advantage of it. They gloated. They got smug and they’ve been oppressing my people. It’s over the line and now I’m upset.” You see God’s anger if you look at Nahum.

**Nahum 1:2** The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.

These people that are bullying His people in evil ways, He will avenge because of His jealous love for His people because of their plight in the world. Nahum speaks to these people. Do you know what the word Nahum means? His name means “comfort.” God is going to rescue you. God cares about His promise. He cares about His people. He cares about His plan. Jeremiah wept for the city. This is God’s city, Jerusalem, and it’s going to be destroyed. It’s going to be broken down. He is even weeping in the song Lamentations. You see the writer there in Lamentations chapter 1 say

**Lamentations 1:1-2** How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave. She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has no one to comfort her;

This is what he thinks about the city.

***16*** *Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy;*

I’m back and it’s mercy time. I will comfort my city, this city that has been so war torn, so disturbed all the time. Do you know what’s so crazy? Jerusalem all the time from then until now, is there any other city that is so at the epicenter of all the conflicts in the world? Yet, what does the name Jerusalem mean? Does anybody know? Jerusalem means “city of peace.” Shalom! It’s supposed to be peace, and yet there is no peace. But God says, “I have set my love on this place and I have returned with mercy.” There will be a false peace. There will be a bloodbath of war. There will be a false peace. Daniel says that time will come. But here is Yahweh saying, “I come with mercy and I love this place. I have a plan for my house, or my sanctuary.

*my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.*

I haven’t given up on my plans. I have a plan for their prosperity. I care.

***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.’”*

I’m back! I haven’t given up. I haven’t forgotten.” Here they are, building. What’s the point? Why even worry about this? He says, “No, keep going. It’s all part of the plan. I haven’t forgotten. I will come back. I love. I care. I will be faithful because I promised.” This is the compassion. It shows us whom God loves. It shows His faithful steadfast love that He maintains to His people. He is the God who remembers and even if we forget, He never does. He cares far more than we realize. The idea there again is don’t get too comfortable. He’s about to work. The people were in exile and as that exile came to a close, Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah chapter 40.

**Isaiah 40:1-2** Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.

There is something special that comes after that, but we don’t have time this morning. So you have to go read it on your own. Later on in Isaiah 53, how much does God care?

**Isaiah 53:4-5** Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;

Can’t He just give up on these people? Can’t He give up on what He is doing?

**Hosea 11:8** How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

“I love you! Even after all of your adultery, I love you. Like Jeremiah 29:11, I know the plans I have for you.” This is the kind of God. He is faithful and He cares. I wish we had more time to talk, but we’ll keep moving because beyond even awareness and the faithfulness, you see

**The Justice He Guarantees (1:18-2:9)**

There are three visions, here. There are visions of horns, there are visions of craftsmen, and then a measuring line. It’s quite the sequence. Here is God’s justice. It’s Him doing what is right and fair and even, you could say, His deliverance. He’s taking them from this to bringing them to this.

Do you ever watch those home improvement shows or you see someone who is kind of doing that before and after? They’re about to get something and take it from being broken and make it right. Or they’re going to take it from this and go to this. It ends with the construction and it’s beautiful. But how does it start? They bring in all the tools, but they don’t start building. They start what? Destroying. You take our kids and you say, “Hey kids, they’re going to build this thing,” and they’re like, “They’re destroying it. They’re breaking everything.” If you’ve ever had some work done on your house, you’re like, “Oh no! This is going in the wrong direction. It’s a big demo.” But we have to break down before we build up. We are going to do what’s right and there are some things that have to get taken care of before we fix and deliver. Here’s what you see going on, here. First, you see the justice of God and how firm it is. It’s firm and right.

***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.”*

The picture of horns that should come to mind, if you’re in the Middle East, you see animals and these animals are the ones coming with horns that are sort of in charge. You’re out there with the rams and the goats and the ones with the biggest horns are walking around like “I am in charge.” They knock around anybody else who would threaten them. We understand the horns represent the one who is in charge, who has power, who has strength. In Daniel, we see that horns are sort of the symbol for Gentile kings that represent the nation behind them. Here are four horns. These are not two pairs, but four separate horns that likely are on animals. These horns are the ones that scattered Israel. These are the nations that have scattered Israel.

You see that picture of horns. In Africa, we had a lot of hunters come and they would want to go hunting. They would come and see the cape buffalo and then put the horns up on their wall. “I conquered it.” You see those kinds of icons in sports teams, like Texas, or whatever it is. These are the horns. These horns are the Gentile rulers. There is a question here about whether or not these are four specific kingdoms that might be like what it seems Daniel says in his vision, the kingdoms being likely that of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and then Rome. It’s this idea of here are these specific kingdoms that came and scattered. There is another thought that maybe these four different horns just represent the corners of the earth or the four sort of points of a compass on a map. It’s just every direction, all those that would attack. I’ll leave it to you to read Daniel chapter 2 and 9 and to think over those things. I think that for our purposes today, we see the justice of God in delivering His people. He’s right and fair because these horns, the people who have come to scatter and who have gone too far, God is going to deal with them. We see not only the instruments that He uses, but then the judgment He brings through these craftsmen.

***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.”*

These four craftsmen will deal with these horns. The idea of craftsmen is sort of more of a smith. There is an artist and they work with various tools with metal and they would use often a hammer to smash or grind or destroy things. So here are these craftsmen and they are coming to destroy, to smash these horns that have scattered Israel. God is going to bring judgment. These craftsmen are often craftsmen who would use metal to build idols and then they would also destroy. Here they are and they are starting with a demo. God says, “I am going to do the demo and destroy these horns that think they’re so great and have conquered my people.” There is too much to dive into there, but that’s the general idea. It’s that the horns will meet justice through the craftsmen God brings.

The craftsmen, again, there are questions about what that might be. It could be that each progressive horn smashed the other, if you’re thinking of those kingdoms. They took care of each other. Except the fourth craftsman, who is this who would be the one who would destroy this last kingdom of Rome? Well again, we’ll have to wait until a little bit later to answer that question. But then what happens? His justice is not only firm, it’s real. You see the justice there in verse 1 of chapter 2.

***1*** *And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand!*

He’s measuring with something like a measuring tape, like a plumb line. You can imagine that when someone is doing that, they have a plan. They have an intent. Often, they have some kind of authority or ownership over the thing. You wouldn’t just let someone walk into your room while you’re sitting there reading and they start measuring your room. You would think, “What are you doing in here? You have no authority to measure.” If someone starts measuring, you would think action is going to start happening. Someone has authority or ownership. God is claiming authority and ownership. “I have authority here over Jerusalem. I have a plan and this justice is going to be real in this place.”

***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*

But the plan for Jerusalem is sort of unique because as he is measuring it, all of a sudden it seems as if the angel is told to run to Zechariah. As this measuring is happening and Zechariah is trying to figure out what’s going on, the angel is told to run.

***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.*

It’s going to be so big that it’s going to be beyond what you’re expecting, here.

***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.’”*

Thinking back to Exodus, God is saying, “I’m going to protect her and I will be the glory in her midst.” Something very significant is going on, here. The big question that we’re up against in this passage that I think we want to take some weeks to start to unpack, but the question is about this idea of this hope that is given to Zechariah. We’re looking into the future. We’re seeing some mountains on top of each other and exactly how far is it in between? What’s going to happen? When does this happen? Is this fulfilled in the days of Zechariah? Is this when Ezra and Nehemiah come and they build the temple? Does that all take place? Or is it a future time? I’m still in chapters 1 and 2 like you, so we need some time. But I think probably, as one of Pastor Ritch’s favorite answers to is it happening now or is it happening later? Well, yes. Now exactly how does that break down? I think we’re going to take some time to work through it. There are some beautiful conclusions that I think we can reach. But for Zechariah’s purpose, he is being given hope to the people at the time that God has not forgotten. He has not given up. He knows. He cares, and He will address and deal with what needs to be done to advance His plan. He will do it. He is so sure about it that He’s already taking measurements. Those measurements are going to surpass our wildest expectations and it’s going to happen in ways that we would never expect. But the idea is that it’s happening and it’s so sure and it’s so swift that he starts to say

***6*** *Up! Up!*

Come on! Let’s go! The Hebrew word is sort of one of those call out words like, “Whoa! What’s going on? It’s time to go! Everybody back to Jerusalem!” Now, you’re thinking Jerusalem is just sort of in rubble and it’s kind of a bunch of ragtag people and they’re doing stuff. Babylon is nice and we’ve got comfortable couches that are leather and all this. But Jerusalem…He’s like, “No, it’s time to go! Guys, they’re measuring. It’s starting. In fact, this city, Babylon, is condemned. We have to get out. The demo is happening here and it’s going to restart over there. We have to go. We have to move!”

*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.*

God is saying, “Go to Zion. Get out of there. Come back here!” He’s telling you how serious this is.

***8*** *For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you,*

You’ve been gone and now God’s glory is at stake. This is so sure. I’ll tell you how much this justice will be fierce because

*for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye:*

God cares about this so much it’s like when they’re poking you and saying this isn’t happening, it’s like you’re poking God in the eye. The apple of the eye, it’s not often you get close enough to somebody to look into their pupil. I remember sitting on my mom’s lap. You sit there and you look at the eye and if you look really close in the pupil, you see a little person. And you’re like, “That’s me!” (Laughter!) That word “pupil” is the same word used in Deuteronomy. He says “little man.” Little man of His eye. Pupil, I think is a Latin word that refers to little doll. It’s the tenderest part of your eye. Someone so close and so vulnerable. He’s saying, “You poke God’s people and you are poking Him in the eye. The apple of His eye. Right at the gate, at the window. I love you and I’m going to do this thing.”

***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.*

I’m going to flip this around. Waving his hand is sort of that general up top. “Take care of them. They’re done.” God says, “I care about this. It will be fierce.” What is so surprising is how does this all unfold? These prophets, if we start to skip ahead it’s going to be some years of silence and someone is going to come, saying, “Repent, because someone’s coming!” We think, “Oh, they’re going to get it!” Yet, it doesn’t happen the way we would expect. Don’t get too comfortable. I know you want to get there, but we’re not there yet. God is the Defender of His people. Here’s what He says in Psalm 34.

**Psalm 34:7** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

He is the one who has been at work. I wish we could go back and look at all the ways that He has shown up, but He is the one who is at work and the one who will be at work. Read Psalm chapter 2.

**Psalm 2:1-12** Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

You see, these people would claim and hold onto as the people of God, the deliverance. Not just a forgiveness of their own sins, but also of justice for the wrong they had suffered through the enemies and those who had rejected God. This same King will yes, bring mercy, but also justice. How could a sinful people experience that with hope? Again, we can only taste a hint, but look here at verse 10. There is something special.

**The Closeness He Promises (2:10-13)**

Look at where God is. You could call this the ultimate homecoming. He says

***10*** *Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.*

This is interesting because in verse 13, He says

***13*** *Be silent, all flesh,*

You know those times in sports, in stadiums. I’ve gone to a couple of games. You’re there and everybody is cheering in the crowd. You have a star player and he goes up and he does something and he falls and he sprains his ankle and then he goes into the locker room and then the home crowd says, “Awww!’ and the away crowd says, “Yeah!” A little bit goes on. It’s half time and all of a sudden, the music comes on and the star player starts to walk out and the home crowd is like, “Yeah!” and the away crowd says, “Awww!”

Here’s what is going on. God is coming in and all of the Israelites have been sitting there and thinking, “We’re losing and we’re behind.” But it’s like when Yahweh gets on the court, when Yahweh gets on the field, there is no stopping Him! He says, “Sing and rejoice! Here He comes!” Everyone else who thinks you’ve been ruling, He says, “Be silent, because He’s coming. He has roused Himself like an animal that has roused himself and said, ‘It’s time for me to move.’ You beware!”

God’s closeness is a good thing. It is worth singing about. It’s worth celebrating. You all as a church did that so wonderfully. We sang. God is close. He can dwell with us. Sing and rejoice. He will dwell in our midst. We know that in a special way through how He came and manifested Himself as Jesus Christ, both God and man. He died on our behalf. He rose again. He reigns. And He never leaves. He sent His Spirit to be with us. Even now, He is with us and we can say He is in our midst. We can sing! It’s worth celebrating. It’s a good thing. And this is a big thing. Look at the people His closeness includes.

***11*** *And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people.*

Those who were once not a people, now they’re my people. This is amazing! God is the one, this Yahweh of hosts, this God has come! What a reason to sing. In fact, why wouldn’t we say, “Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive its King.” We sing that, but not everyone does. It is a good thing. It is a big thing. But it is also a grave thing because this is for those who are His, those who follow Him, those who take refuge in Him, not in the kingdom of this world. To those who would avoid Him, who would find refuge in their own works or refuge in their own rulers or their own systems, whatever they find around, anything other than Jesus, He says,

***13*** *Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.*

God is coming!

You think about the two siblings. One is bullying the other one and they’re going. But when the garage door starts to open, the one that is getting bullied thinks, “Oh, buddy!” And the one that is doing the bullying, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” and maybe runs away. But when God comes, there is a big difference and it depends on our relationship with Him. This ultimate homecoming is a promise we can cherish. His closeness brings great comfort to those who are afflicted. But if you are comfortable without Him, it will bring you affliction. The choice, the call is for you to draw near to Him so that His closeness would not terrify you, but that it would be the best news you had ever heard.

**Isaiah 49:15-16** “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;

God will not forget! In Psalm 73, for the psalmist, it seems as if God has forgotten, but he goes to the temple and he realizes everything is happening according to plan. There is hope. You have to see what you can’t normally see, by faith.

If I’m not mistaken, October is Blindness Awareness Month. I heard the story of one man and his experience growing up without sight. He talked about how he would sit in front of the tv during cartoons and the show would go on, but he didn’t really care about the show because he had no idea what was going on. He’d just wait for the commercials, because he could hear the commercials. “This is the newest toy. This is what’s going on.” He was just trying to get windows into the sighted world. He would walk by movie theaters with his parents and he never dreamed of them being for him. But over his lifetime, this new thing developed called audio descriptions. Someone would watch the movie, write a description, and then record that description over so that you could listen to the movie and hear the description and actually watch it. It opened an entirely new world. Before, he had no idea what was going on. But now, someone was describing it and he was engaging. Something is happening. I can see the joy. I’m excited about what’s going on.

When it comes to the future and the overarching plan of God, we can’t see it. It’s out of sight. It’s in another realm, in a sense. We have no idea. We start to disengage. We start to lose hope. But just because we can’t see it doesn’t mean God can’t. He knows exactly what is going on and how He wants to make it clear to us to give us hope. Visions like this use descriptive language to give us a window to see what God is doing, to cause us to engage by faith and refresh our hearts with hope. They help us to be reminded that we can’t see what is ahead and what’s happening, but we don’t have to get comfortable with the fatigue. We don’t have to lose our sense of fight and direction. We just need the hope that comes from the God of the prophet Zechariah that even when we forget, He never does. He always remembers!