

Taking It Home:

- Michael Card, in his excellent book entitled *A Violent Grace*, writes, “Yet His pain was the prelude to the outpouring of God’s favor. By enduring the violence in that circle of hate, Jesus accomplished a costly exchange. With each blow, He carried away our grief and our brokenness and bought back for us—for that howling mob and for every person since—the treasures of grace” (see page 66). Reflect personally or share openly with your Growth Group how Michael Card’s words influence your thinking about Jesus and your life?
- Take a moment and thoughtfully read Hebrews 12:2-3, found in the New Testament. Focus your attention on the words *joy, shame and hostility*. Evaluate the importance of those words for understanding what motivated Jesus to die for you. What are the implications of the last part of verse 3, which reads, “so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted”?
- For millennia people died so kings could live and enjoy earthly power and glory. Jesus radically changed that paradigm, dying so that people could live for eternity, having received forgiveness for sin and the blessing of honor and peace, purchased by Jesus’ death on the cross. 1 Corinthians 15:3 sums it up well, when the Apostle Paul declares, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.” Do you believe that Jesus’ violent death on the cross was on your behalf, so that your sin would be paid for and you could be forgiven and free, reconciled to God and filled with hope? Why or why not?

Additional Resources:

- Michael Card’s *A Violent Grace*
- Max Lucado’s *Six Hours One Friday*

Dr. Matthew R. St. John
Bethel Church
March 24, 2013

Your King is Coming!
Zechariah 9:9

Your King is Coming!

Notes:

For a restatement of Pastor Matthew’s sermon points, visit pastormatthew.net and click on the “Write This Down” tab.

For more information about Growth Groups, Growth Group homework, and a podcast of sermons with homework, visit www.bethelcf.com.

Growth Group Homework

For the week of March 24, 2013

Zechariah 9:9

Quick Review: The history of the Ancient Middle East is stained with utter brutality, as one empire after the next leverages hatred and war for its own purposes. Violence is always close at hand, used by the reigning kings as a tool for establishing and sustaining position and power. In the midst of this world a little known prophet tells of one more king who would rise up, setting set himself apart, arriving peacefully on the scene. What we come to know is that like those before him his arrival also gave way to violence, but it was violence that he took upon himself rather than directed toward others. He set himself apart indeed.

My Story:

- Violence and brutality seems to be the default setting for human history, whether it is actual war between nations or the battles that rage in our own human hearts, wherein hatred and bitterness and an unforgiving spirit rule each day.
- In what ways do you see this truly playing out in your own life, in your family and among your friends?
- Do you even agree with the assessment that violence and brutality are the default setting for us all?

Growing Deeper:

- The prophet Zechariah had a front row seat to the unfolding drama of the ancient world, living as he did under the heavy hand of the Persian kings. He was intimately aware of the preceding era, the destruction of the land of Israel by the Assyrians and then the Babylonians, and then the Persian takeover of Babylon. He also anticipated the rise of the Greek empire of Alexander (see Zechariah 9:13). The rulers of these nations prided themselves in their status as violent conquerors, yet the messiah-king, the Lord Jesus, about whom Zechariah prophesies in Zechariah 9:9, will arrive in humility and on a donkey, a sign of peace and gentleness (this, of course, is fulfilled on Palm Sunday, as recorded in Matthew 21:1-11). If all the other kings appeared on the back of a war-horse, why is Jesus' arrival as king on the back of a peaceful donkey?
- Though Jesus formally arrives in Jerusalem on a donkey, a sign of peace, and this to the applause of the crowds (cp. Matt. 21:9), things quickly take a turn. The violence that kings are known for seems to come after all, but this time it is not violence directed toward the population from a king, but violence absorbed by the king from the population (read Matthew 26-27 for more information). Why is it that Jesus transformed how kings related to humanity, taking the violence onto himself, "becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (see Philippians 2:1-11)? You might consider reading Romans 5:6-11 and 1 Peter 2:21-25 for additional insight.
- Thoughtfully read Isaiah 53:4-11, an ancient prophesy about Jesus' violent death, written about 700 years before Jesus died. What does it tell us about why Jesus' life had to meet a violent end?