

6pm Evensong Sunday 10 May 2026

Zechariah 8:1-13, Revelation 21:22-22:5 – A different kind of manifesto: have faith that God will make you a blessing

We've had quite a dramatic end to the election season; a season when we've heard a lot from politicians talking about promises to give people a new hope and to deliver what people want. Our reading from Zechariah sounds rather like an election manifesto, with its promises to deliver security and safety, and peace and prosperity. Seven times we hear **thus says the Lord**, and then we hear the promises the Lord is making to his people.

First, we hear of the Lord's **commitment to return to Zion**, the location in Jerusalem of the Temple and therefore of the Ark of the Covenant, which had so powerfully symbolised God's presence among his people. The Lord is **jealous for Zion with great jealousy ... and with great wrath**. You might think that jealousy would be an emotion that we should be zealous to suppress, but that is because we confuse jealousy with the sin of envy, instead of seeing jealousy as a refusal to tolerate disruptive intrusion into the life of the one you love. God's passion for his people shines through everything.

The second promise is that the Lord's return to dwell in Zion will renew Zion as **the faithful city** and **the holy mountain**, because his return to Jerusalem will enable the people to be changed from within. This is a promise that people can be changed from within, through the presence of God. This is a promise that will later be fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit, come to live in us, as God's people, bringing us truth and making us holy.

The third promise gives us a picture of a more hopeful future. The old sitting with staff in hand; the children playing; this is a future where every generation is represented. People returned to rebuild Jerusalem without the ones too old or too infirm to leave Babylon. Jerusalem needs to be re-populated, and the Lord promises a future where old men and old women and boys and girls will feel safe in the streets. This is life as it should be; this is creation renewed and restored.

Zechariah's listeners want to believe in these promises. But the return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple has been fraught with difficulty, and they're feeling discouraged. And so the fourth promise is a reminder that **nothing is impossible** for the God of miracles.

The fifth promise in v7-8 is huge: **I will save my people ... and I will bring them to Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God ...** [in a relationship of] **faithfulness and righteousness**. From Babylon in the east, from Egypt in the west, people who've been scattered in the dispersion will be brought home, to live in renewed covenant relationship with God.

Then in v10 the Lord sets the scene for his final promise of peace and prosperity. Life has been tough: there's been economic hardship with ***no wages for people or for animals***; border insecurity and tensions with neighbouring countries has deprived them of ***safety from the foe for those who went out or came in***; and suspicion and fear have generated internal tensions. ***But now*** says the Lord, it will not be as it was ***in the former days .. for there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things***. Desolation and drought at an end; creation renewed and restored, heralding the river of crystal and the tree of life in our reading from Revelation, in John's vision of heaven is a place of light and life, of worship and healing, where there is nothing unclean and nothing is accursed.

But we are not yet in heaven, and the last part of our reading from Zechariah suggests we still have a part to play here on earth. The final part of the Lord's last promise to his people distinguishes these promises from anything you might read in an election manifesto. Because at the end the Lord says ***so I will save you and you shall be a blessing***.

Not "I shall be a blessing to you", but ***you shall be a blessing***. We're reminded of God's covenant with Abraham, in Genesis 12:2-3: ***I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing***. And so God says to his people ***Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong***.

The pathway to blessing is obedience to God. God's people need to do what he has called on them to do, confident in God's promise that we are his people, and he is our God.

For Zechariah's listeners in Jerusalem, this meant getting on with the work of rebuilding the Temple, of overcoming the opposition and hostility that was all around them and recapturing that sense that God's presence was with them.

But we are the people of the new covenant, living with a new hope because of the faithfulness of Jesus, and living in the righteousness that is ours only because of Jesus' death on the cross. For us, as the people who live on this side of the cross; the people who have the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, being obedient to God means allowing the Holy Spirit to change us from within. It means praying for, and playing our part in the coming of, the Kingdom and the renewal and restoration of creation. It means sharing with other people why we have put our trust in Jesus and why his love can change their lives too.

If we have faith in God's promises we will not fear or falter. We can be a blessing to others.