

Rev. Dan Welch Wednesday of Lent 2 2-24-21 Text: Zechariah 1:18-21 **"It's Tool Time"**
[Slide] *"It's Tool Time."* In the 1990s this expression was made

famous by a TV sitcom called *Home Improvement* starring Tim Allen. Each episode included Tim's home improvement show, called *Tool Time*, which was a show-within-a-show. Tim was joined on the program by his friend and mild-mannered assistant Al Borland. They were introduced with the question, *"Does everybody know what time it is?"* And the response was always what? *"It's Tool Time!"*

[Slide with King Darius] **The prophet Zechariah is also concerned about time and tools.** The three dates in his book (Zech 1:1; 1:7; 7:1) make it clear that, because Darius the Persian is the reigning monarch, it's a time of discouragement and despair. This was the first time in over 400 years that Israel didn't have a descendant of King David ruling on the throne. "Deep despair and great misery!"

One night, God gave Zechariah eight visions. In the second vision God shows the prophet four craftsmen. What's the gist of the vision? *"It's Tool Time!"*

[Slide with “horns”] That had to sound strange to Zechariah’s contemporaries. We wouldn’t be surprised if they were a bit cynical and sarcastic, especially when we understand more about “the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem” (Zech 1:19) **The horns are the enemy nations.** Why describe enemy nations as horns?

Think horns of bulls and goats. Think antelope, rhino, deer and elk horns. Animal horns capture and kill. They gore and gouge. Their horns torture and tear. That’s why biblical authors employ horns to symbolize ultimate enemies. For example, in Daniel horns represent ruling empires, crushing everything that stands in their way. In the book of Revelation, John describes both the dragon and the first beast, as having ten horns. Horns announce destruction, devastation and death. And Zechariah says that four craftsmen are the solution? *“It’s Tool Time”*? Really? “Deep despair and great misery!”

[Slide with people] What enemies—like maiming and mauling horns—have ripped your life apart? Is it rejection? Have your friends voted you off the island? Is it frustration? Has raising children become

more than you can handle? It is desperation? Has a dead relationship broken your heart? “Deep despair and great misery!” Trying to defeat enemies that destroy us like animal horns, using the tool of God’s Word, sometimes seems pointless.

We hear voices that say, “Everyone with their head on straight and eyes wide open knows that reading and studying the Bible doesn’t change a thing. It’s a quaint, antiquated activity that’s completely irrelevant. If you really want to change things, take matters into your own hands; be tough; be rough; stick it to ‘em.” And so we walk around with our shoulders slumped and our spirits downcast—add to that a chip on our shoulder. We get up in the morning, put in our time, do our duty, and then go home—defeated and discouraged. “Deep despair and great misery!” We don’t stand a chance against “the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem” (Zech 1:19).

[Slide- Zech 1:20] “The LORD showed me four *craftsmen* (ESV) *blacksmiths*.” (NRSV) (Zech 1:20) **The craftsmen are the builders.** The ESV renders the Hebrew word *charashim* with “***craftsmen***,” the NRSV

translates *charashim* with “**blacksmiths**.” I think that the NRSV is on to something. Don’t you? Doesn’t “blacksmith” sound better, more powerful? Yes, maybe we have a chance against the horns after all! Yeah!

[Slide of Blacksmith] Let’s go with blacksmiths. Don’t you feel better already? We can post this on our website: “At this church, members are like blacksmiths with strong hands and bulging biceps! They’re strong-muscled people who emerge from worship with sweat on their brow and fire in their eyes!” We aren’t craftsmen with pliers and screwdrivers. We’re blacksmiths with sludge hammers and blowtorches! Yeah!

[Slide-sketches] Too bad that’s not what Zechariah means. Sure, *charashim* may refer to blacksmiths in some texts, but **the prophet’s second vision isn’t about pulverizing metal it’s about building the temple**. In fact, all eight of the prophet’s visions are connected to rebuilding the temple. So, as much as we want to see ourselves as blacksmiths, it’s not the right translation. So we’re back to: “Deep despair and great misery!”

We're back where we started; craftsmen taking on the big, bad, beastly horns. That's Moses against Pharaoh. That's Joshua against Jericho. That's David against Goliath.

[Slide- Zech 1:21] And that's exactly the point. Although the craftsmen don't look like much, Zechariah's second vision ends with these words: "The craftsmen have come to terrify them and throw down these horns of the nations." (Zech 1:21) We don't conquer evil by walking around with hard hearts—holding on to grudges and wanting to get even. We don't conquer evil by giving people the cold shoulder and talking behind their back. No, the scattering horns meet their match against craftsmen who rebuild the temple, directed by God's Word. When the temple goes up the horns go down! *When the temple goes up the horns go down!* God's kingdom comes in victory!

[Slide- Victory over every enemy] **God defeats every enemy in the book of Zechariah!** At the top of the list is Satan, the attacking accuser (3:2). Sin also meets its match throughout the book. It is taken away (3:5), destroyed (5:4), removed (5:11) and washed away (13:1). All of this

previews and predicts Christ's Easter victory when he defeats *every* enemy in the universe—every dragon, devil, all darkness, and even death!

[Slide of disciples] There once was another group of people that also didn't look like much. Their leader—Peter—knew more about bass fish and boat docks than he did about Roman culture and Greek language. His cronies also didn't have any formal education. Were they humble? They jockeyed for cabinet positions. Were they loyal? Once, at the worst possible moment, the three leaders fell fast asleep. I know, they were sensitive to the needs of others, right? Two of them called "the Sons of Thunder" once wanted their enemies torched with fire.

Before Jesus came along the disciples were blue collar with hearts as hard as their work ethic. There's no evidence that Jesus chose them because they were smarter or nicer than the other guys. When Jesus called them each disciple had to ask, "Who? Me?"

[Slide- Jesus with Cross] And get this. **Zechariah's "*Tool Time*" was a part of their message.** Only these tools weren't used to build up; they were used to tear down. Zechariah 13:7: "Strike the shepherd, and the

sheep will be scattered.” Tools of torture were used against the Good Shepherd; a blindfold, a whip, some thorns, a purple robe, a hammer, some nails and finally a spear. This isn’t a syrupy, sentimental love; but a fierce love for you—written in the blood of Jesus. God’s love is for you—in your rejection, in your frustration and in your quite desperation.

[Slide- Resurrection] From Zechariah we know that, *when the temple goes up the horns go down!* On the third day Jesus—the Temple—was alive forevermore! When the temple goes up the horns go down! Jesus conquered all the powers that rip us up and tear us apart. Then he announced a building program.

[Slide- I will build my church] **Jesus says, “I will build my church.”** Are you ready to rebuild what’s been destroyed in your life? Christ uses humble people, not the proud; Davids not Goliaths. Blacksmiths need not apply. Craftsmen, on the other hand, are most welcome; craftsmen who lay hold of their tool—God’s Word—to hear it, study it, love it, believe it and follow it. And they build with great vim and vigor, joy and delight. No more deep despair or great misery!

[Slide- Tool Time]“Does everybody know what time it is?” “It’s Tool Time!” Let’s build! Amen.