

Rev. Dan Welch Wed. in Lent 2 3-3-21 Text: Zechariah 3:1-10
“Silencing Satan”

We are just about there, the one-year anniversary of the beginning of the COVID shutdown. Last March, what began as a fifteen-day shutdown to flatten the curve, of course turned into something much, much longer. Toward the end of the March last year the word was getting out and the realization was sinking in for millions of Americans that life was about to be radically changed. In-person school: cancelled. In-person worship: cancelled. Restaurants-closed. Along with sporting events, movie theaters, and just about everything else deemed “non-essential”. The good news was that the cost of gasoline was plummeting! The bad news was that was because most of us had no place we could actually go!

[Slide-“Nowhere” Word search] As we were coming to the very end of March, I remember seeing this meme on Facebook: “The first word you see is where you are going in April” (Word search with everything saying “nowhere”) Yep, we were all stuck- big time. We were going ***nowhere!*** In fact, if you look on the fourth line down you’ll see we were going “Absolutely Nowhere!”

[Slide- Your Kingdom Come] Your Kingdom Come. Satan absolutely does not want God's kingdom to come -*anywhere*. Satan will do anything, so God's kingdom never comes into our lives. Satan says, "Looks like you're stuck—big time!" You're going absolutely nowhere! That's the story Zechariah chapters 3 and 4.

[Slide- Accusation] **Accusation.** "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest [a different Joshua from the book of Joshua] standing before the LORD's Messenger, and the *accuser* [Satan] standing at his right hand to *accuse* him." (Zech 3:1) Satan throws the book at Joshua, who has just traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem. Joshua was going to serve as high priest in the rebuilt temple. Sacrifices would soon be offered. God's people would soon be covered with divine mercy and grace. God's kingdom was coming! Satan says, "Not so fast!"

[Slide- Zechariah 3:3] "Joshua was standing before the Messenger, clothed with *filthy* garments." (Zech 3:3) The word "filthy" denotes maximum filth and utter defilement. A sewer of pollution covers Joshua!

Why is that? Joshua was born in Babylon—a defiled and unholy land. How can an unholy priest remove sin from unholy people?

All is lost! Joshua is in a situation even worse than a complete pandemic lock-down. The accuser, chuckles and says to the high priest, “Looks like you’re stuck—big time! You think you can go about doing God’s work? You’re going absolutely nowhere!”

[Slide of Satan pointing finger] Satan—the accuser—also rubs our face in our filth so we feel stuck and in utter despair. Satan points out that—just like Joshua—we’ve lived in a defiled and unholy land. What? We’re perfectly at home in the ghetto of gossip, the jungle of judgment, the precinct of pride and the slums of slander.

If you’ve ever felt shame and disgrace, it was Satan’s whisper that crushed your heart. If you’ve ever felt alone and abandoned, it was all according to his plan. If you’ve ever felt useless and no good, it was his accusing finger in your face. Zechariah 3 and 4 moves us from accusation to—

[Slide- Intercession] **Intercession.** It's Jesus! Jesus intercedes for Joshua. Wait a minute! Jesus in the Old Testament? It might sound strange to think of Jesus as present and active before his birth in Bethlehem, but long before Jesus became flesh in Mary's womb, He was present in the world as the LORD's Messenger. "Joshua the high priest was standing before angel of the LORD, which is another way of saying "*the LORD's Messenger.*" (3:1) "Joshua was standing before *the Messenger.*" (3:3) "*The Messenger* said." (3:4) "*The LORD's Messenger* was standing by." (3:5) "*The LORD'S Messenger* solemnly assured Joshua." (3:6)

[Slide- Jesus on Cross] Jesus stands in Joshua's court. Jesus stands in *our* court! In Zechariah 3 God also calls Jesus "my Servant." This is the same Servant Isaiah describes as stricken by God and afflicted; who bears our griefs and carries our sorrows; who was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.

In Zechariah 3 God also calls Jesus "the Branch." This comes from Jeremiah 23:5, "Days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up

for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.”

What’s more, in Zechariah 3, God calls Jesus “the Stone.” This comes from Psalm 118:22, “The Stone the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone. The LORD has done this and it’s marvelous in our eyes.”

What happens to Satan when he’s the presence of the LORD’s Messenger—who is the Servant and the Branch and the Stone?

[Slide- Zechariah 3:2] “The LORD **rebuke** you, Satan. The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem **rebuke** you.” (Zech 3:2) The Hebrew verb translated “rebuke” denotes defeating and driving back an enemy with anger and rage. The LORD’s Messenger says something like this to Satan: “How dare you bring charges against Joshua! You’re completely out of line here and have absolutely no authority in this court whatsoever. Leave immediately and I don’t ever want to see your face again!” Satan is speechless! He falls to the ground like a popped balloon. Does he give up and go home? For a while, to be sure. But not forever.

[Slide- Jesus on Cross-Top View] Five-hundred years later Satan again went to court with the LORD's Messenger. Only this time the accuser sends Judas to the garden, Peter to the courtyard, Pilate to his palace and Herod to Jerusalem; all so the crowds would send Jesus to the cross. The Servant is led like a Lamb to the slaughter. The living Branch is pruned, uprooted and cut down. The Stone is pulverized, pummeled and crushed to pieces. But get this! The Messenger still intercedes, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Accusation leads to intercession (for Joshua and for us). This leads to—

[Slide- Resurrection] **Resurrection.** In spite of Satan's best efforts, the kingdom still comes! Resurrection! Solomon's temple will be rebuilt! In chapter 4, the governor of Persian Judah, Zerubbabel, lays a foundation stone for the new temple. "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it." (Zech 4:9) It's 520 BC and Zerubbabel takes a leftover stone from Solomon's temple and uses it to build a new temple. This rebuilt temple previews *the* rebuilt

temple. We call that *the* resurrection. Jesus say, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it.”

[Slide-Woman by Empty Tomb] See the joy! See the happiness! See the utter delight! The Servant is alive! The Branch is flourishing and stunningly beautiful. And the Stone the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone. The LORD has done this and it’s still marvelous in our eyes!

Baptized into Christ’s Easter victory we’re not stuck at home with nowhere to go; to live a life of hopeless despair. No. We’re getting out and going out- our destination is the new heavens and the new earth. How can we be so sure? The LORD’s Messenger—our Lord Jesus Christ—still stands in our court, rebuking Satan and coming to our defense.

Is Jesus really that generous? That loving? That giving? Yes. Yes. And yes! Jesus doesn’t say, “Everyone who achieves” or “everyone who succeeds” or “everyone on the church council.” John 3:16, Jesus says everyone who believes will be saved. I invite you to believe Jesus and be saved!

[Slide-Exhortation] Zechariah 3–4 moves from accusation, intercession, resurrection to **exhortation**. “Not by might and not by power but by my Spirit.” (Zech 4:6) We overcome the accuser by God’s Spirit. God’s Spirit working through God’s Word. God’s Word that points us to Jesus.

[Slide-Satan Accusing] In Zechariah we see Satan for who he really is. A deadly enemy? Certainly. A supernatural creature who can do great harm? No doubt. The tormentor of our souls? Indeed. Does Satan hate Jesus and hate us? Count on it. But also count on this—Satan is a defeated enemy who has no authority over us, *whatsoever*.

[Slide-SPAM] SPAM- Satan Persistently Attacking Me. How do we overcome the accuser; live in confidence and courage; exude joy and great delight? “Not by might and not by power but by my Spirit.” Amen.