

## **The Call To Return (Zechariah 1:1-6 January 7, 2018)**

It probably comes as no surprise to anyone who knows me that I am **not** a lover of modern art.

*On White II* by Wassily Kandinsky is widely considered as one of the greatest masterpieces of 20<sup>th</sup> century art. It proudly hangs in *The Musee National d'Art Moderne* in Paris.

Me? I look at this masterpiece and I think ... OK it is interesting – the colours, the composition, the creativity – but truth is – I don't get it – and if I'm honest – I don't like it – give me Rembrandt or Monet any day.

That is how many of us view the book Zechariah.

We read it and think ... OK it is interesting – the night visions, the symbols, the prophecies – but truth is – I don't get it – and if I'm honest – I don't like it – give me Psalms or Matthew any day.

Zechariah is not the kind of book many of us naturally warm to.

He writes in a style called apocalyptic – filled with symbols and visions. It is not the stuff we are used to. It requires a fair bit of work and effort to grasp what is going on.

**But** believe me – it is well worth the effort.

Zechariah is a *major* minor prophet – he is a minor prophet with major impact.

Not only is it a part of our Bible – inspired by God – profitable for teaching, reproof and correction – but it is an Old Testament book that deals extensively with the coming of Jesus. It gives some of the most wonderful images and pictures of Jesus I know.

Also, it is second only to Isaiah in the number of times it is quoted in the New Testament. Time and time again – you will say – O that is from Zechariah! Passages like:

- The King humbly entering Jerusalem on a donkey's colt.
- The Messiah betrayed for 30 pieces of silver.
- The shepherd struck and the sheep scattered.

It is also a book that speaks very clearly to us today – to anyone feeling a spiritual failure and wondering if they have blown the opportunity to have a place in God's kingdom.

It speaks to those feeling overlooked by God – or questioning God – or wondering why their life is not going as they hoped.

I am sure that this is a book you will come to love as much as I have come to love it – a book you will see as well worth your time and effort to understand and plumb its riches.

This morning – I plan on giving you an overview of this book. We are going to look at the first six verses which sets up the entire book.

Turn with me to Zechariah.

Zechariah is the third last book of the Old Testament. So, if you find Matthew – just go back a few pages.

Look at the first verse of this book with me. Zechariah 1:1:

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo.

A little tip. It is well worth your effort to work out why a prophet references a particular date.

In this case, the date is crucial to understand why God sent Zechariah with this particular prophecy.

The eighth month, in the second year of Darius – is around October/November, 520BC.

Why this is important is that at this time the Jews Zechariah spoke to were totally discouraged and felt completely let down by God.

They believed that some very specific promises made to them had failed.

They were questioning God and His prophets.

Maybe I can illustrate the setting for the book this way.

Imagine a couple have been going out for two years. She keeps dropping hints – I like diamond rings with rose gold, my mum is wondering just how serious we are, I have four weeks off in April that would suit for time away – just putting it out there.

Then out of the blue he surprises her – romantic dinner, candles, mood music – then he says – I have something to ask you.

She's like – I'm ready.

OJ – here it is – my boss says it would be great for my career to go to London for a year – you don't mind do you?

She bursts into tears and storms out – let down and disappointed.

He just shrugs – man – I just don't get women.

She expected one thing – she didn't get it and felt ripped off.

This was the Jews of Zechariah's day.

They had an expectation concerning the nature of several specific promises made in the prophets – they felt God had not kept those promises and they wanted answers.

If you look down to verse 12 of chapter 1, the angel of the Lord asks God the question the people of Judah wanted to ask:

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?

What we are going to see is that this reference to **seventy years** – refers to a specific prophecy about which they had certain very clear expectations.

They believed God had promised that after seventy years of exile – the anger of God would lift and they would receive blessing.

As Zechariah opens – they wanted to know – Lord when are you going to do what you promised?

The prophecy of Zechariah is God's reply to this question.

The name – Zechariah – means God remembers.

The point of this book is that despite what they may think – God has **not** forgotten and abandoned His people.

His promises have not and in fact cannot fail.

So now we need to ask – what is it exactly that they expected and why did they feel so let down?

In verse 2, Zechariah reminds them – “The LORD was very angry with your fathers.”

For hundreds of years – prophets – in particular prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had warned the Jews in Judah that God was angry at their sin – that they needed to repent – or God would bring judgment on them.

Despite these warnings – they steadfastly refused to change their evil ways.

Finally, God said – enough. Here is what the Lord said to them through the prophet Jeremiah:

You have not listened to me, ... you have provoked me to anger. ... Because you have not obeyed my words, behold, I will send ... for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring [him] against this land and its

inhabitants ... I will devote [you] to destruction, and make [you] a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. Jeremiah 25:7–9.

The judgment of God began in 605BC.

Judah was attacked and the *first* group of exiles were carted off to Babylon. And of note – in this group there was a young man named Daniel.

The attacks continued for nearly twenty years.

The last was in 586BC.

In one final attack, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were utterly destroyed.

The leaders and anyone of significance were carted off in exile – to many nations – but mostly to Babylon.

This was an arduous journey of 1,500 kilometres – that took months – to a strange land filled with idolatry and wickedness.

It would be hard for us to comprehend how abandoned and cut off from God they would have felt.

There was no Temple, no way to properly worship God.

They are like the man who commits adultery and loses his wife and kids – and then realizes how much his sin has cost him.

They realized that they had failed God and deserved this punishment so in the fifth month of every year – the month the Temple was destroyed – they set this time aside for mourning and fasting.

They were convinced there was no way back to God.

Babylon was the end for them.

If God were like you and me – it would be the end. They got what they deserved – God had washed His hands of them.

But, God is **not** like you and me – not only is He a holy God – He is also a gracious God.

So, mixed with the anger of God – we find the grace of God.

Not only did Jeremiah prophesy that the nation's sin would lead to them being exiled in Babylon – he *also* prophesied God would show mercy and bring them back.

Jeremiah 29:10:

For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

*After 70 years*, God's anger would relent – He would remember His people and return them from exile.

No way do they deserve it – this is 100% grace.

This prophecy – the 70 years prophecy becomes very prominent in the pages of Scripture – including in Zechariah and Daniel.

In 539BC – Daniel – still alive – still in exile in Babylon – was reading Jeremiah and was reminded of this prophecy. He did the maths and realised – he had been in captivity for nearly 70 years.

This prophecy should be fulfilled in a few years.

Daniel prayed – an incredible prayer of confession for the nation – a prayer for forgiveness – a prayer of faith.

And God *did* remember His people. Despite their sin and failures – He had promised to bring them back from exile – and His Word **never** fails.

One year after Daniel read this prophecy and prayed his prayer of repentance – the Persian King Cyrus the Great – captured Babylon and soon after he issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to the Promised Land.

There was great rejoicing. They were going home.

Something they never imagined could actually happen – was happening.

While most of the exiles stayed in Babylon to see how this first wave of returnees went – around 50,000 of them – under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel and Joshua the Priest – made the 1,500 kilometre trip back to Jerusalem.

Then in 536BC – 70 years after Jeremiah made his prophecy – incredibly – the people were back in the land and had laid the foundation for a new Temple.

The seventy years was up.

Now try and put yourself in the shoes of one of these Jews.

Born in Babylon. You grew up hearing the stories of Zion.

The Elders sat with you by the Euphrates River and told you the stories of Yahweh – the God of the covenant.

With tears in their eyes they said – we sinned and refused to repent. That is why we have been exiled to this godless pagan land.

But – a voice interjects – yes but didn't God promise to bring us back after 70 years?

Someone else laughed – no way can that happen. Babylon will never let us go.

**But** the Lord of hosts – God Almighty – raised up another nation – Persia – and another King – Cyrus – and against every piece of logic – here you are standing there in Jerusalem watching the foundation of the Temple being laid – watching as everything God promised came to pass.

Judah's sin was not the end. God's covenant still stood.

Brothers and sisters, if you are ever tempted to doubt the fact that the Bible is the Word of God – this prophecy should be all the proof you need.

A prophecy that the Jews would be decimated by Babylon – taken into captivity and then after seventy years – they would return to the land.

Read Isaiah – in a time when Persia was not a superpower – Isaiah even prophesied the name of the Persian King – Cyrus – who would arise to set the people of God free.

These prophecies were so accurate – so perfectly fulfilled – sceptics said – Jeremiah, Isaiah and Daniel simply had to be written after the fact.

But archaeology and every scrap of evidence we have insists that these were written before the incredible events of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

God keeps His promises. His Word never fails.

Now here is where the events of Zechariah begin.

If you were one of those Jews watching the foundation being laid – what would your expectation for the next 5, 10, 50 years be?

Consider Jeremiah's prophecy again, but this time I want us to focus on verse 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.

Not only did God have a plan to return us to the land – but He had a plan to bless us in the land.

His anger would lift and He would bless.

In the very next chapters – chapters 30-33 – God outlines what His plans are to give His people a future and a hope.

He says – I will restore the fortunes of Israel and Judah.

Jerusalem will be rebuilt and never again be overthrown. God's people would return from every corner of the empire. They would become a mighty nation and destroy their enemies.

**And** – Jeremiah made it clear that the One who would bring all of this to pass would be a great King in the line of David who will reign over his people – the Messiah.

The picture painted in these chapters is one of an abundant harvest – a land filled with peace, joy and victory. It is as if Paradise would return to the land.

But here is the problem.

The seventy years had passed – from the first exile to laying the foundation for a new Temple.

The hope was palpable.

They expected that the King and His Kingdom – the hope of Israel was about to dawn.

Now we move forward to the year 520BC – the year Zechariah references in verse 1.

It is now sixteen years *after* the foundation of the Temple had been laid, but things had *not* gone the way the Jews who returned had anticipated or hoped.

Cyrus had set aside only a very small area for the Jews – it was just a patch of land 65 kilometres by 55 kilometres.

Not surprisingly the people already living there resisted moving out – and the surrounding neighbours were unhappy about them coming back.

This meant continual conflict.

As well, they arrived back to a land that was in the midst of drought.

It was tough going – really tough.

They started work on rebuilding the Temple but only got as far as building the foundation. The foundation was so small compared to that of Solomon's destroyed Temple that they lost heart.

In the 16 years since they had not done any more work on the Temple and had been unable to rebuild the walls of the city.

The Jews who were living throughout the empire looked at the struggles of the returnees and said – forget that – I'm not going back.

They remained a small nation who were struggling economically because of the drought and the attacks by neighbours.

They expected, peace, prosperity and joy.

They found conflict, struggle and despair.

And perhaps most significantly of all – the Branch – the King – the Messiah – had **not** come to destroy their enemies and heal the land.

Two years earlier the Persian King Cambyses had died – leaving a power vacuum in the empire – and they thought that would be the moment Messiah would come.

He didn't – a Persian General named Darius rose to power.

So, as Zechariah opens, the people of God were totally discouraged.

They felt the Word of God had failed them and that God had forgotten them.

Where was God?

Where was His Messiah?

Why had He not blessed them?

Why had the prophecy of the 70 years failed?

Where was the healing and joy Jeremiah promised?

The key to Zechariah's answer – in fact the key verse in this whole book – is verse 3:

Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: **Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.**

What Zechariah says is – remember that these blessings are for those who return to the Lord.

Maybe I could paraphrase this as:

**You want Me to return to you? – only after you have returned to me – says the Lord of hosts**

Notice who is speaking here.

The Lord of hosts. Some translations read – the Lord of armies or the Lord Almighty.

The idea is that the One who commands the hosts of heaven – stands ready to draw near and bless His people.

But first – there is something we have to do.

Perhaps I can explain what is going on this way.

Think again of Jeremiah 29:10–13:

The Jews are saying – we did our seventy years in exile – we have come back to the land – so where is our future and our hope?

Someone I was very close to had this part of the prophecy – verse 11 – as their life verse.

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.

They quoted it at their baptism. They put it on the inside cover of their Bible.

This promise was made by God to them.

Then their marriage fell apart, their finances fell apart, their life fell apart.

I remember him sitting in my office an angry man – God let me down! God's Word failed me! So I'm bailing on Him!

God said He had plans for my life – plans for my welfare and not for my calamity – Where was my future and my hope?

Perhaps you have been there. You trusted God and had an expectation of how your life should go.

You expected God to give you a few breaks.

My friend had done something so many of us do – something the Jews in Zechariah's day did.

Taken a specific promise – ripped it out of its context – and become angry when the promise seemed to fail.

What Zechariah reminds the people is this – look at the whole prophecy.

God says these blessings will flow *when* you return to God.

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

This promise of blessing follows a condition.

I will bless you – **when** you seek Me with all your heart.

My friend had sin in his life – serious sin.

Instead of dealing with it – he waved this verse around as if God should bless him in spite of the way he lived. He should have sought God with all His heart.

Same thing in Zechariah's day.

That is why he reminds them:

**Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.**

I want to suggest that the problem for Jews in Zechariah's day – my friend with the life verse – and indeed many of us is that we misunderstand what this statement means:

**Return to me and I will return to you.**

Maybe because of our view of grace or God – or just because our hearts are sinful – we think I shouldn't have to do anything for God to bless.

Zechariah corrects this notion.

There are two questions here?

**What does it mean to return to the Lord?**

**What does it mean for the Lord to return to us?**

These questions lie at the heart of the book of Zechariah.

First:

**What does it mean to return to the Lord?**

On one level – I imagine the Jews found this pronouncement strange.

Return! What more do You want? We **have** returned – 1,500 kilometres if you please. We have shown our trust by returning to the land.

We did our bit – now bless us.

But God is talking about far more than geography. This is a heart word.

Basically, it means:

**To repent.**

Return is one of the main Old Testament words for repentance.

When it is used of turning to the Lord – it always carries the idea of repentance.

If you look down to verse 6 – we read – so they repented – literally – so they returned. It is the same word.

In verse 4 – Return from your evil ways – it means turn from your evil ways – repent.

As we work through Zechariah – this is going to become a recurring theme. It comes up again and again. If you want blessing make sure your repentance is real.

One of the problems we have is that often our repentance is too superficial.

I suspect the Jews might say to Zechariah – if you mean repentance – haven't you noticed – we have repented?

We have been regularly fasting and mourning for years. Not sure how much more you want?

God definitely wants more.

If you read the minor prophets, true repentance is a huge theme not just in Zechariah – but in all of the prophets who wrote after the exile.

Haggai began prophesying just two months before Zechariah.

He told the people to repent because they cared more for their own houses – than the house of the Lord.

You say you love God – but you are more interested in building your kingdom than letting God use you to build His.

In Haggai 2 – he says they were unholy – and he sums it up by saying they did not return to the Lord (2:18) – they had not truly repented.

In Malachi – the last book of the Old Testament – Malachi sums up their sin with these words – Malachi 3:7:

From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. *Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.*

Sounds like a theme!

You want Me to bless – then repent – draw near to Me – keep My commandments.

Malachi goes on to tell us – the people said – but we thought we had repented.

God says – really? You are robbing Me. You lie about how much you tithe. You sacrifice blind, sick and lame lambs because they are cheaper. You do not treat me as a great King – you do things you would never do to a worldly King.

These are not signs of true repentance.

So what is true repentance?

As we work though this book you will see that Zechariah makes it clear that to truly repent means:

## **To hate sin and long for righteousness.**

*John Calvin* sums up the thought of these opening verses in these words:

**We cannot embrace God's offered favour except our sins become hateful to us.**

**We cannot embrace God's offered favour except our sins become hateful to us.**

What does repentance look like? We hate our sin so much we will not stop pleading with God to give us the strength to deal with it.

We won't settle for – forgive me Lord – and then head right back to our sin.

Don't settle for a superficial repentance.

Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 7:10:

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Ask God to send His Holy Spirit to flash His light on your heart – to show you how dark it really is – how much your sin grieves a Holy God.

I have done this and all too often what I found was – beneath the veneer of repentance – I realised that I loved my sin more than I loved God.

It is only when we have the kind of repentance that leads to a hatred of sin and a longing for righteousness – *that* God will bless.

Repentance means hating your sin and longing for the King – the One – who can actually make you holy.

Zechariah reminds them that it was this kind of superficial repentance that led the nation into trouble in the first place.

Look at verse 4:

Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD.

If you go back over the history of Israel – again and again they did say we repent.

But what they really meant was – we don't God's wrath to fall on us.

They didn't have the heart repentance that breaks us and bears our soul and actually deals with sin.

Zechariah says – Your forefathers didn't listen. They offered up superficial repentance they did not turn from their sins.

So instead of blessing they received judgment.

Verses 5-6:

Your fathers, where are they?

Your fathers did not listen – they did not return to God – so they perished – either under the sword of Babylon or in exile.

And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers?

God continues – it is true that the prophets who warned them also died – but don't be mistaken though – the words they spoke – My words, My statutes, My promises made through them – **every one of them still stands.**

The promise – turn to Me and be blessed – stands.

Ignore Me and perish – stands.

Every single promise in Jeremiah and every other prophet – not one word will fail.

The problem is not the promises – the problem is repentance.

The point is that now – this new generation is at the crossroad. This group has a chance to start fresh but they were in danger of treading the same path as their forefathers.

Amazingly – by the power of the Spirit – Zechariah's words pierced the Jews who heard them.

Chapter 1 verse 6:

So they repented – they returned – and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.'

They hated their sin – it became detestable to them.

In the flow of the book – it is this act of repentance that then leads to God saying – now I will return to you – I will draw near to you.

For example, look down to verse 16 of chapter 1:

Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it.

God promises to return to His people.

But what does this mean?

Zechariah also has to deal with the question:

### **What does it mean for the Lord to return to us?**

It was clear in the prophets that God returns to us:

#### **To bless.**

What becomes clear is that the Jews had read through prophecies like Jeremiah and seen promises of prosperity, victory over the nations, peace.

And now they were saying – hey we repented – where are these particular blessings?

They were looking for an earthly King and an earthly kingdom.

What we are going to see in Zechariah is that God says – you need to set your sights higher.

If all you want is earthly blessings – that is like taking a kid to Toys R Us and saying – take what you want and he just takes a few bits of wrapping paper to play with.

Zechariah says God has bigger plans for blessing His people.

The way He is going to return to you – the way He is going to draw near – the way He is going to bless is:

#### **With His King and His righteous Kingdom.**

If Zechariah had said:

*God will bless with His King and His Kingdom.*

That would have made sense to the Jews.

The Jews had this picture of a King like David coming – defeating Persia and the other nations and making Jerusalem the most dominant kingdom on earth.

But, as this book unfolds Zechariah says – God has more in store. He plans to build a *righteous* kingdom.

That should not have been a surprise. Again and again we are told the Branch – the Messiah – will come to build a righteous kingdom – and we are told that only righteous people can enter God's kingdom.

For example. Psalm 15:1–2:

O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart;

What we will see in Zechariah is that building a kingdom is easy – building a *righteous* kingdom is almost impossible.

It means dealing with sin – once and for all.

Sin is so hard to deal with. Although the Jews truly repented in verse 6 – like all of us – repentance fades.

We stop hating our sin and start looking longingly at the world.

So in this book – God says – I am going to do something so amazing it will blow your mind.

Perhaps I could paraphrase verse 3 like this:

**Repent towards Me and I will bless you beyond anything you can imagine by sending My King who will make you holy so that you can enter My righteous Kingdom.**

The Jews in Zechariah's day were looking for an earthly King who would usher in an earthly kingdom.

What we are going to see is God saying – no – the kingdom can't come until you are holy.

What you need is not just a King – but a Priest-King – someone who can remove the penalty of your sin and one day even remove the presence of sin. A King who can make you holy.

Putting all of this together – this is how I want to summarise the message of this morning – and since these opening verses summarise the book – it is also the summary message for the entire book of Zechariah.

**Long for the King who can present you holy.**

**Long for the King who can make you holy.**

I don't want to give away too many spoilers from this book.

But the Jews read the blessings – King, kingdom, prosperity, holiness.

They thought all of these came at once – as soon as the King came.

But – in visions and symbols and prophecies – Zechariah shows that the King will actually come *twice*.

**Long for the King who can present you holy.**

He comes the *first* time to enable us to be presented as holy – declared holy.

God will treat us as holy.

Soon after Zechariah spoke – the voice of the prophets went silent – for 400 years.

Then came a voice in the wilderness crying – Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Zechariah 1:3 language.

Soon after the Priest-King Himself arrived crying the same thing – Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The Priest-King – Jesus came and he died in place of His people. Those who turn to Him – those who repent – and in this way He presents them holy.

There is an awesome picture of this in chapter 3 of this book where Joshua the Priest has the garments of his sin removed and is clothed with pure garments.

But – crucially – while we are presented as holy – sin is still present in us and in the world. The Priest-King has to come a *second* time to destroy every enemy – every sin.

So Zechariah says as well we must:

**Long for the King who will make you holy.**

Long for the time when He will come a final time to not just clothe us with righteousness – but to actually make us holy.

It is only then that the kingdom of righteousness will bloom.

We live after the first coming of the King – but I am so longing for the day when Christ will return to finish what He started in me.

The day I will be free not just of the penalty of sin – but the presence of sin.

But right now we live in the time before Christ destroys sin.

What does longing for the King who will make us holy look like for us today?

The Apostle James summed up the truth for you and I with his paraphrase of Zechariah 1:3.

James 4:8–10:

**Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.** Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Keep drawing near to God. Keep repenting of your sin. Keep hating your sin. Keep drawing near to God for cleansing.

Keep saying – How long O Lord till you return to banish sin?

Do this – and you will receive the blessings of Christ.

Too many people I counsel want to try and reverse this order.

They say – **if** God will draw near to me – **then** I will draw near to Him.

Since God seems far off – since He doesn't seem to make Himself big in my heart, since He doesn't seem near to me, since He doesn't seem to care – then I will draw near to the world.

No – God calls on us to repent and draw near.

But even then – all too often our repentance is superficial.

We only want to repent enough to get heaven and get blessing now.

Often we don't truly hate our sin. We are not thirsting for righteousness.

There are areas of our life that we will not allow God to transform.

And in exchange for these crumbs – we expect God to bless.

And when any adversity appears – we are quick to ask – why God – what is the deal here? I give – I attend – where is my blessing?

Zechariah challenges us – to seek more. To seek God with all our heart.

To hate every barnacle of sin that attaches itself to our life. To hunger and thirst for righteousness.

**And** – to ask God for more. To ask God in the person of Jesus and His Spirit to come near – now and when He returns.

To remember that in Christ – the real blessing is that Jesus has removed the filthy robes of our sin and one day will finish the work and make us holy.

Jesus will destroy this world and establish a new kingdom – where only righteousness reigns.

I don't know where each of us here this morning are at.

If you are not a Christian – the message of this book is that God longs to draw near to you – to make you His child – to make you holy. He longs for you to be part of His kingdom.

But that requires repentance – turning from your ways and choosing God and His ways.

This afternoon we have a course that outlines how you can turn to God and what that will mean.

What about those of us who are Christians?

Maybe some here this morning feel that God's promises to you have failed or God has forgotten you.

Maybe your Christian life not gone as you thought it would.

Maybe you wonder why there seems to be so little power to defeat sin.

Maybe you have questions about the way God is running His world.

And maybe – there are times – perhaps right now – where you feel you failed God – so badly He can't forgive you – that you have forfeited the promised blessings.

If Zechariah tells us anything – it is that it is never too late to turn to God.

Some of us know there are sins we toy with and never put to death. Some even wonder – have I failed God so many times He will never draw near again.

Zechariah tells us – there is never a time when God will not draw near to someone broken over their sin – we can always repent – and He will draw near with healing and forgive us.

Zechariah outlines the whole plan of God to deal with sin and bring us into His eternal righteous kingdom. It is an awesome plan.

Because in it we find that – if we draw near to Him – He promises to draw near to us.

If you want blessing – real blessing – then:

**Long for the King who can present you holy.**

**Long for the King who can make you holy.**