

PALM SUNDAY 2nd April 2023.

Scripture: Matt 21:1-11

WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?

Today we are celebrating Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the week before Easter. This is one of the most joyful days recorded for us in Scripture, but it does not match the overwhelming joy of Jesus' resurrection.



There was a big crowd on that day and they were singing praises to God and cheering Jesus on from the side of the road. The Pharisees were also there, trying to urge Jesus to stop the crowds from hailing Him as a King.

Now I wonder if you have ever considered another witness who was there that day? The donkey. Yes, the donkey. Now you may wonder just where this sermon is going and how can we learn from a donkey?

In the Old Testament God once used a donkey to speak to someone so I guess He can do this again.

This story is not my own, it was written by a retired Pastor Wayne Hill. Let's begin.

Once there was a young donkey named Jacob. Jacob lived in a village, right next to Bethany, east of Jerusalem. Jacob was an enthusiastic little donkey, a bit mischievous and loved to play, run around braying – hee-haw, hee-haw!

Jacob knew that one day he would grow big and strong enough to carry a man on his back.

One day, he noticed great numbers of people going through his village and he found out they were going to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

So Jacob followed along but stopped at the village border to watch. His eyes were shining with excitement as people were all dressed up in colourful clothing and he caught the scent of the many goats and lambs they were bringing.

He was distracted by this and suddenly his owner saw him, tied a strong rope to him and brought him back to his mother. Rat's he thought.

Suddenly two strange men approached, pointed to him and cried out – “Look, there he is. It is just as the Master said.”

Jacob didn't know what was happening, but he was more excited than afraid. The owner stopped the men and said “why are you untying our donkeys?”

“The Lord needs them. He will send them back to you shortly” they said.

The owner agreed and off they went, Jacob and his mother in tow.

They stopped just outside of the village where the man put their coats over Jacob's back. “Is someone' going to ride me?” Jacob wondered. “I have never carried a man before. I hope I will be strong enough. I will do my best.”

He was also a little worried about the person who was going to ride him. He had seen many mean people ride donkeys before who yelled at them and even hit them with a stick.

But all of his fears vanished right away when he met the rider. The other men called Him Jesus. Jesus smiled kindly at Jacob and stroked his back with His big, strong hands. “Hello, little donkey,” He said. “You will carry me into Jerusalem today.”

Jacob’s heart skipped a beat. “Jerusalem! Whoopee!! We are going to Jerusalem after all.”

Jesus mounted on Jacob’s back and off they went.

As they were approaching, large numbers of people lined up along both sides of the road. Some even lay down their coats in the road for Jacob to walk across. Others cheered and waved palm branches back and forth. Some of them even bowed low to the ground as he passed by. They were singing, shouting and rejoicing saying: “Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Jacob thought he was the most important donkey in the city, maybe even in the entire world. And so, he held his head up high, marched strongly and bravely while carrying Jesus on his back. It was the proudest moment in his life.

It was already late when they entered Jerusalem. Jesus slipped off Jacob’s back and disappeared into the temple. Jacob’s mother said: “we must find shelter for the night.” His mother said she was so proud of him.

Jacob couldn’t sleep as he kept thinking about the amazing things that had just happened. “All those people cheering and shouting...for me!” “I can’t wait until tomorrow. Perhaps there will be even more people who will honour me with presents and gifts this time.”

He woke early the next morning and hurried into Jerusalem, thinking that the people would be waiting for him. He ran to the marketplace where there were lots of people. He marched proudly down the centre of the road, but the people didn't make a sound. They didn't even notice him.

"Hey, hey, everybody! It's me, Jacob!" he called out. But to the people it only sounded like he was saying, "Hey, hey, hee-haw, hee-haw." And they just kept right on working. No-one waved any palm branches. No-one put their coats on the ground.

Jacob went to the area outside the temple. "Perhaps they will notice me here," he thought. Once again, he called out to the people and even ran around and kicked up his heels. But no-one paid any attention to him. It was almost as if they didn't recognise him. One mean old man even yelled and threw a piece of fruit at him.

Jacob ran back to his mother, crying and confused. "I don't understand it mother. I thought they all loved me. Yesterday they treated me like a king! And now they act as if I wasn't there/. One of them yelled at me! I don't understand. Why are they treating me so differently?"

Jacob's mother looked sadly and lovingly at her poor, sobbing son. She leaned forward and kissed him gently on the forehead.

"Foolish donkey," she replied. "Don't you see, that without HIM you are nothing."

