

Rev. Luke C. Werre  
Peace, Sun Prairie  
April 9, 2006  
Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1-10

### A KING ON A DONKEY

If the United States president arrived in Sun Prairie today, would you expect him to arrive in a Ford Escort? If you were watching a movie about King Arthur and the knights of the round table, would you expect them to storm a castle on a bunch of donkeys?

It should strike us as strange that Jesus, the King of kings, rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. It's a signal to us that there's more going on here than a simple pep rally for Jesus. What Jesus did He did deliberately. He did it deliberately as a blessing for us.

Though it's only one detail in the whole picture of Jesus' triumphal entry, today we are going to focus on what it means for us that Jesus is a king on a donkey.

First of all, compared to an American president or a King Arthur, a king on a donkey would seem to be a nobody, a non-entity even in His moment of fame, someone who has no real impact. And isn't that often the rub for us? Maybe it seems that Jesus really doesn't do much for me in my day to day life. I still have to work. I still get frustrated. I still have way too many problems stressing me out. And the Christian faith sure seems to be taking a beating lately from novels to newspapers to organized efforts for imposing immorality on our schools and culture. We Christians don't seem to be winning anything. And what about all the death in the world? All the disease and starvation? The terrorism? If Jesus could stop these things why doesn't He?

Strange as it may sound, on that Sunday nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus answered these nagging reservations by obtaining a donkey to ride. You see, Jesus' answer was to fulfill the

Scriptures. You heard the reading from the Old Testament book of Zechariah today: "*See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey.*" God prompted Zechariah to write that prophecy some 500 years before Jesus was born. But that prophecy was all about Jesus. Jesus took special pains to make sure He did everything the Old Testament part of the Bible described about Him—even if it meant a detail like riding a donkey into Jerusalem.

In view of that, listen to how deliberately Jesus acted in the Gospel lesson today: "*Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'*" Jesus was well aware of what He was doing—and earnest. He demonstrated that He always makes sure His written Word, the Bible, comes true. Whether God makes you a promise in the Scriptures or speaks of what will happen in the world, His Word is perfectly reliable and can be trusted. He will not overlook even one detail like a donkey.

And that's especially important when we consider the purpose of the Bible. Jesus said, "*These are the Scriptures that testify about me.*" The entire Bible is all about Jesus. It tells us who Jesus is and what He came to do. Jesus riding on a donkey would help people identify Him. Ah! This man is the One the Scriptures described and told us about!

When Jesus entered into Jerusalem it didn't just work out that way. It was planned. It was intended. Jesus was going there for a special purpose. So Jesus Himself mentioned that He was riding on a young donkey that no one had ever ridden on before. Have you ever reserved something for a special purpose?—your best china just for guests, a backpack just for school, a shirt and tie just for Sunday morning! Here was a beast of burden with no previous purpose but to bear Jesus into Jerusalem.

And consider the miracle of Jesus' will prevailing. Listen to what we're told, "*They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied*

*at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, 'What are you doing, untying that colt?' They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.*" Did you catch the miracle? Why did these people let go of their valuable work-animal? Why did the untrained colt not buck Jesus off? Because Jesus is Lord over all and bends all things to serve His purpose.

What was His purpose? He was entering Jerusalem to be sacrificed on the cross. He was entering Jerusalem to take our place and to save us from the judgment of God that the devil and the world are under. He was entering Jerusalem to save us from everything that confuses, frustrates, and stresses because of sin. He was entering Jerusalem to be swallowed up by death but then to burst death open by His powerful resurrection so that anyone at all who relies on Him will live forever victorious as He is.

For that matter Jesus was a king riding on a borrowed donkey. And why not? He lay in a borrowed manger, sat in a borrowed boat, distributed borrowed loaves and fish to the crowds, celebrated the Passover in a borrowed upper room, was buried in a borrowed tomb. Jesus had no possessions here on earth. As true God, He already owns everything. The only possession He desires is our trust in Him. The only prize He came to win was our eternal salvation. The only kingdom this king rode into Jerusalem to establish was our grateful obedience.

And so He was not like any earthly king with a royal, golden carriage or a military or a retinue of officials. He was a king on a donkey—a humble king, a gentle king—one who is not far away and unapproachable—as the people with palm branches obviously weren't afraid to approach Him. Notice how our King Jesus comes to us even today—always gently with a declaration of forgiveness, always blowing comfort into our hearts by His Spirit, always putting our worries, frustrations and fears to rest with His promise to save, always brimming our hearts with a desire to please Him.

Whether everyone in the crowd fully understood it or not, the words they sung from the Old Testament psalms said this very thing about Jesus, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!*"

God became man and came here to save us to His own Kingdom. That's what that song means. That's what answers all our questions and dilemmas. That's why Jesus was a king on a donkey.