

Gunston Bible Church
Pastor David Bennett
14 April 2019
Key verse: Luke 19: 29-31

“Got a Donkey”

Good morning Gunston it is so good to see so many of you here this morning, we do not take your presence for granted, in fact turn to the person on your right and say Thank You for being here today!

Well today is Palm Sunday, so for time's sake let's get into the word of God, more importantly let's get the word of God into you!

I wish simply to remind you this morning of a familiar story from the Bible. It began early Sunday morning, what we now call Palm Sunday!

We all know that Jesus rode into Jerusalem, however he was not the only one heading into the city for the Passover, there were a few others that day for starters there was...

Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor,

In the year 30 AD, Roman historians record that the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, led a procession of Roman cavalry and centurions into the city of Jerusalem to occupy the Antonia Fortress & the Praetorium with a full complement of elite & battle-hardened Roman soldiers ever ready & willing to suppress any attempted uprising against Roman rule that might occur.

Imagine the spectacle of that entry. From the western side of the city, Pontius Pilate leads Roman soldiers on horseback and on foot.

Each soldier was clad in leather armor polished to a high gloss. On each centurion's head, hammered helmets gleamed in the bright sunlight.

At their sides, sheathed in their scabbards, were swords crafted from the hardest steel; and, in their hands, each centurion carried a spear; or if he was an archer, a bow with a sling of arrows across his back.

Drummers beat out the cadence of march for this was no ordinary entry into Jerusalem.

Pilate, as governor of the region which included not only Judea, but Samaria, knew it was standard practice for the Roman governor of a foreign territory to be in its capital for all religious celebrations.

It was the beginning of Passover, a strange Jewish festival that the Romans allowed. However, the Romans must have been aware that this festival celebrated the liberation of the Jews from another empire, the empire of Egypt.

So, Pilate had to be in Jerusalem. Since the Romans had occupied this land by defeating the Jews and deposing their king about 80 years before, uprisings were always in the air.

And therefore on this occasion, Pilate had traveled with a contingent of Rome's finest from his preferred headquarters in Caesarea-by-the-Sea, to the stuffy, crowded, provincial capital of the Jews, Jerusalem.

The Temple would be the center of Passover activity. Antonia's Fortress, the Roman garrison built adjacent to the Temple compound, would serve as a good vantage point from which to keep an eye on the Jews.

Pilate's entry into Jerusalem was meant to send a message to the Jews, and to those who might be plotting against the empire of Rome.

The spectacle was meant to remind the Jews of what had happened the last time of a wide-scale uprising. And, it was meant to intimidate the citizens of Jerusalem themselves, who might think twice about joining such a rebellion if it was slated to fail.

The next entry into Jerusalem was that of...

Herod Antipas, Tetrarch (King/ruler)

He had been the Ruler of Galilee & other provinces, the one who had imprisoned & beheaded John the Baptist.

He had also arrived with great pomp & ceremony, undoubtedly occupying the palace of his late father, Herod the Great.

The last major uprising, long before Pilate's reign, which happened shortly after the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC. That's Herod Antipas' father.

After putting down the rebellion there, the Romans marched on Jerusalem. After pacifying the city, they crucified over 2,000 Jews who were accused of being part of the rebellion.

The Romans had made their intolerance for rebellion well-known throughout the area, again we could emphasize the tension in the area was like a **powder keg** ready to explode, and the events of that time would forever change the world as they and we know it.

Of course, this was the beginning of the great 8-day Passover Festival. This is a time when the Jews remembered God's deliverance of their ancestors from Egyptian slavery.

Jews from all over the world were gathering in Jerusalem to celebrate, & the city was filled to overflowing, with both Jews and Romans.

So obviously, Jesus wasn't the only one coming to Jerusalem for the Passover.

If Pilate's procession was meant as a show of military might and strength, Jesus' procession was meant to show the **opposite**.

The two processions could not be **more different** in the messages they convey. Pilate, leading Roman centurions, asserts the **power and might** of the empire of Rome which crushes all who oppose it.

Jesus, riding on a young donkey, embodies the **peace and tranquility** that God brings to His people.

Illustration

You see, in times of war conquerors would ride in chariots or upon prancing stallions, however in times of peace, the king would ride a colt to symbolize that peace prevailed. So, for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem upon a colt is to declare that He is a **King proclaiming peace**.

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) - Repeating a scene from 13 years ago, several hundred Arizona fans and Tucson police clashed in the streets late Saturday following the University of Arizona basketball team's loss to Wisconsin in the NCAA tournament.

Authorities said 15 people were arrested after fans hurled beer bottles and firecrackers at officers, who then used pepper spray to disperse the crowd. ...

"We've been training for this event for several months now," said Sgt. Pete Dugan of the Tucson police department. ... Police brought in cruisers and a unit of officers with batons, helmets and face masks to block the street when people started tossing beer bottles, cans and firecrackers, hitting police vehicles and endangering officers.

Crowd control is an ugly business, especially when the crowd is unhappy or doesn't get what it wants. Celebrations can turn to melees in moments.

The most famous of all crowd control crises came on the heels of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The crowds lined the road, jubilantly waiving palm branches and shouting happy Hosannas. Just days later, the same crowds--protesting their disappointment in their king-turned-criminal--began chanting feverishly for his death. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (Mark 15:13).

They wanted one thing--an earthly king to overthrow their tyrannical oppressors. They got another--a humble, suffering servant, come to save them from their sins. And so they rejected him.

The Lord wasn't surprised by the reaction. Like the Tucson police department, He'd been preparing well in advance and was ready to meet the challenge.

We've all had our Palm Sunday and Good Friday moments. Those times when we've come to expect one thing from God, but receive another.

How will you respond to the Savior?

Will you mock and scorn Him for failing to meet your immediate expectations? Or will you continue to shout your Hosannas and patiently w

ait for Easter morning, where all the disappointments are turned into glorious rejoicing?

Those who watch that day will make a choice. They will either serve the god of this world, might and power; or they will choose to serve the king of a very different kind of kingdom, the kingdom of God.

Illustration: The donkey awakened, his mind still savoring the afterglow of the most exciting day of his life. Never before had he felt such a rush of pleasure and pride.

He walked into town and found a group of people by the well. "I'll show myself to them," he thought.

But they didn't notice him. They went on drawing their water and paid him no mind.

"Throw your garments down," he said crossly. "Don't you know who I am?"

They just looked at him in amazement. Someone slapped him across the tail and ordered him to move.

"Miserable heathens!" he muttered to himself. "I'll just go to the market where the good people are. They will remember me."

But the same thing happened. No one paid any attention to the donkey as he strutted down the main street in front of the market place.

"Thealm branches! Where are the palm branches!" he shouted. "Yesterday, you threw palm branches!"

Hurt and confused, the donkey returned home to his mother.

"Foolish child," she said gently. "Don't you realize that without Him, you are just an ordinary donkey?"

Just like the donkey who carried Jesus in Jerusalem, we are most fulfilled when we are in the service of Jesus Christ. Without him, all our best efforts are like "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6) and amount to nothing.

When we lift up Christ, however, we are no longer ordinary people, but key players in God's plan to redeem the world.

OK getting back to Palm Sunday, Jesus was walking toward Jerusalem. He stops for a moment & sends 2 of his disciples into a nearby village to carry out a special errand.

Here is how **Luke 19:29-31** records that event: *"As He approached Bethphage & Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you, & as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it & bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'"*

Five hundred years earlier, the prophet Zechariah had proclaimed that fact when he wrote,

Zechariah 9:9, *"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous & having salvation, gentle & riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

This was the beginning of the Passover

Here are a few things we can take away for the Palm Sunday entry, for starters....

1. The Donkey was God-given

God Knew the donkey would be there, (Zechariah 9:9) (Matthew 21:4-5)

He told of it

He led Jesus to the city

He chose donkey (sign of humility) over a horse (conqueror)

Jesus knew the donkey would be there, (Matthew 21:1-3)

He sent the disciples

He told them exactly what they would see

He knew the significance of fulfilling the prophecy and riding in on a donkey.

Saints we need to remember that God is in control and has a plan even if we don't see it or understand it.

The goal is to find that purpose and then walk in it.

Like the donkey that transported Jesus, we ask ourselves...

Are we God Driven?

In our hearts...

Is Jesus our Lord and our Savior
Is the Holy Spirit our guide

If there is anything else that drives our hearts, it will prove to be useless in the realm of significance.

Only that which is motivated by a passion and love for God will endure for eternity!

In our lives

Are we Obedient to His Word
Are we Obedient to His Spirit
Are we Obedient to his calling on our life?

The true test of where God ranks in our lives is how we allow him to Rule and Reign in everything we do, as it is all for him and not us.

In our Churches

Is God is the central focus
Is it God's ways not our ways
Is it God's will not ours

If it is our...

Agenda,
Desires,
Preferences,
Opinions,
Perspectives,
Comforts, etc.

If any of the above become more important than God's, then no matter how hard we try it WILL FAIL!

No ifs ands or buts about it, without God it WILL FAIL!

God has got to be our top priority and His will must be our desire!!!

Just like this donkey that was available was used by the Lord to escort Jesus into Jerusalem, each of us have something or things in our life that we could give that could help carry Jesus to another place

What is it that you can give?

A song

Hug, or shoulder to cry on

Phone call or Email

Assist teaching Sunday School

Possibly just a little time

For the crowds lining the road that day, Jesus riding a colt into the city was a public declaration that He was the promised King!

"Everyone who lined the streets had a different reason for waving those palms. Some were political activists; they'd heard Jesus had supernatural power, and they wanted him to use it to free Israel from Roman rule. Others had loved ones who were sick or dying. They waved branches, hoping for physical healing. Some were onlookers merely looking for something to do, while others were genuine followers who wished Jesus would establish himself as an earthly king. Jesus was the only one in the parade who knew why he was going to Jerusalem - to die. He had a mission, while everyone else had an agenda." Bill Hybels

HOW WOULD THE PEOPLE RESPOND TO Jesus entry into the city?

Would they recognize that His Kingdom was not of this world that it was a spiritual kingdom, & He was to be a spiritual King? He had been teaching them that for over 3 years, & still they had not learned who he was and what he meant to do.

2. There were faces in the crowd that loved Him

Perhaps Bartimaeus was there, a man who had received his sight, no longer in his beggar's clothes.

Perhaps Zacchaeus was there, as he paid back his debt to society, & had made his peace with God.

Perhaps the lepers were there, their skin had been cleansed & now they were rejoicing for the healing that the Lord had given them.

Perhaps Jairus' daughter was there, after being brought back to life again after experiencing death.

Perhaps Lazarus & Mary & Martha & Mary Magdalene they were all there! Their lives reflected the love that was in their hearts for this man who had taught them, & molded them & changed them.

As said, there were those among the crowd that ... Loved Him and there were other faces in the crowd...

3. There were faces in the crowd that were sinister.

There were faces within the crowd that had squinty eyes, waiting for Him to say one wrong word to make one mistake, always looking for a slip up or to catch him in a contradiction.

There were faces within the crowd of the Sadducees & Pharisees. They were supposed to be keepers of the law, the spiritual leaders. But Jesus had gained so much popularity that they felt threatened. So, full of jealousy, they watched Him.

There were faces within the crowd that were Romans, fearing revolt & watching for any sign of rebellion against Rome. They were ready & waiting to crush any uprising.

Jesus realized all of the various faces within the crowd, as He listened to their "*Hosannas*," that soon the sinister voices would drown out the voices of love that those crying for Him to be King would soon be crying, "*Crucify Him!*" or simply standing aside, saying nothing at all.

Luke 9:51 tells us that in spite of it all, *Jesus still "...resolutely set out for Jerusalem."*

Jesus rides toward the gate of the city...

As Jesus rides down toward the gate of the city, the crowds are growing, & there is a festive air, for it is Passover & pilgrims are gathering from far & near for this greatest of all Jewish holidays.

Even before Jesus arrives, the news has spread that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. You can imagine the excitement that prevails.

"Have you heard the news? Lazarus died, & was buried in a tomb so long that his body was starting to decay.

This teacher from Nazareth called out, '*Lazarus, come forth.*' & Lazarus came forth. I saw him! They stripped away the grave clothing, & he actually walked & breathed & lived again! Surely only the Messiah could do that!"

The news travels from one person to another, until finally when Jesus was ready to enter the city, great crowds had collected on both sides of the road. They were there! They had cut palm branches & were shouting, "Hosanna to the king!" Excitement prevailed throughout the whole city!

Then Jesus looked over the Faces in the crowd, and when he did he must have seen the mixture of expressions on their faces.

For starters there were those among the crowd that ...

Crowds trampling almost one upon another when suddenly the whole procession stopped.

Suddenly the procession **STOPPED**

Do you suppose it could have been a little like rush hour traffic I95 or 395 during rush hour traffic?

The people who were closest to Jesus could see & they realized that it was He who had stopped the parade.

Then they saw His body begin to shake then they saw His face, & saw sorrow & tears. He was crying.

He looked at the city of Jerusalem. He saw the mixture of faces within the crowd & the masses of humanity crowding there & He realized the emptiness of their lives.

They had not heard his message of peace. They did not understand the purpose of His coming.

Luke 19:41-44. *"As He approached Jerusalem & saw the city, He wept over it & said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace but now it is hidden from your eyes. 'The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you & encircle you & hem you in on every side. 'They will dash you to the ground, you & the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.'"*

They had eyes, but they didn't see.

They had ears, but they didn't hear.

They missed the whole point of the message that God had given to them.

Today, just like the city of Jerusalem, what would happen if we find ourselves in the presence of Jesus?

I wonder if he were to look over the Faces in this crowd what would he find in those faces?

Does He see people concerned about so many things?

Worried about income taxes

Worried about job security

Worried about their health, or lack of it?

Does He see people who are so busy doing things here & there

So busy that they never bother to consider those things that are eternally important?

Never looking at things eternally, just carnal in nature

Does he see people who recognize Him for who He is...

The Messiah,

The Christ,

The Son of God?

When He turns & looks into our lives, I wonder, will He weep once again because of what He sees?

In the account of the Triumphant Entry, we tend to focus on the things we have been discussing this morning and often overlook the donkey and his role in the whole process.

Saints remember God can make something **majestic** out of our **ordinary**

God made something majestic out of this simple donkey, just think about what a “**HERO**” He could make out of **YOU**, if you would only yield your life to Him!

Mark tells us this colt had never been rode before, however, God can tame the wild in your life...

He can calm the **troubled waters**

He can handle the **raging storms** in your life

He can manage all the **ISSUES** we get ourselves into

When **given** to God he can take the simple and use it in a masterful way...

a wooden **manger**,

a fisherman’s **boat**, and

a **Rugged Cross**

All of these things were of little significance, however, when given to God, a mighty miracle followed.

Saints, what would happen if Christ were to ride in here today, what would you think he would see if...

He was to look into our **faces**?

He was to look into our **eyes**?

He was to look into our **lives**?

Would he stop and weep for what he saw?

Let us Pray...