

Gunston Bible Church

Pastor David Bennett

Palm Sunday

“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 that entered the city so the first point we are going to discuss this morning is the Grand Entry into Jerusalem.

1. Grand Entry

This was the beginning of the Passover and everyone who lined the streets had a different reason for being there.

Some were political activists; they'd heard Jesus had supernatural power, and they wanted him to use it to free Israel from Roman rule.

Some were instigators wanting to start a riot, wanted to get Jesus and his band of followers arrested, wanted to stir up the people.

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

The first group that entered the city was...

a. 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.

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...

b. 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.

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

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

The processions could not be more different in the messages they convey.

Pilate, and Herod leading Roman centurions, asserts the power and might of the empire of Rome which crushes all who oppose it. And now we look to Jesus' entry

c. Jesus triumphant entry

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

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**.

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.”*

As he rode into the city you will see there were many there, both for him and against him.

The second point we will discuss this morning is what he saw along that journey to Jerusalem

2. Faces in the crowd

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.

a. There were faces in the crowd that loved Him

Perhaps there was those there who had received sight or possibly lepers were there, their skin had been cleansed & now they were rejoicing for the healing that the Lord had given them.

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

There were those among the crowd that ... Loved Him however, there were other faces in the crowd...

b. 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 and Scribes.

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, they plotted to **Destroy** 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...

Even before Jesus arrives, the news has spread that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. This teacher from Nazareth called him back from the dead.

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.

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?

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.

Which leads us to the last point in today's message

3. Ordinary Donkey

Here was an ordinary donkey. In fact, it was less than ordinary.

It wasn't even a full-grown donkey, in fact, we learn that this donkey had never even been ridden before. Not only had he never carried a king, he had never carried anyone. This was an insignificant donkey.

However, this donkey's significance was found in a simple statement in ***"The Lord needs it."***

And this one **reality**, this one **fact**, changed the significance of the donkey.

This suddenly made him a very important and very special donkey.

Not that there was anything special in his own ability, but in the fact that the Lord intended to use this donkey to bring glory to himself.

Sometimes **we** may feel like this donkey, that we are insignificant that there is nothing special about us. However, in those moments, we must realize that like the donkey our significance is found in the fact that Jesus Christ has called us.

That is he has said to each of us, The Lord needs you!

1 Peter 2:9 *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*

Just as the donkey was called by the master to exalt him, so you have been called out of darkness and been given a new significance as chosen, royal, holy, and belonging to God for the purpose of exalting Christ.

As mentioned in the verses found in both Zechariah and Matthew God Knew the donkey would be there, he told of it, He led Jesus to the city, He chose 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.

You may go years or possibly most of your life not understanding, not knowing what that purpose is.

But somewhere God has a purpose for you. He has a plan that was designed specifically for you.

And you need to be ready for the day, when Jesus comes and says he has need of you.

You need to be in tune, listening to the Spirit of God when he says to you that you have been placed here for such a time as this.

The donkey was special, not because of who he was, but because of who he was carrying.

He was carrying Jesus into the city.

If we want to carry Gods presence into this town and city,

If we want to carry his presence into our workplaces then we have to be willing to become less, so that he can become more.

We are only going to achieve great things for God, not by being something in and of ourselves, but by carrying his presence.

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,

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

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!

The day after Jesus made it into the city 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.

"The Palm 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.

Isaiah 64:6, *"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment."*

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

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

God made something majestic out of this simple donkey, just think about what 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 few stones and a sling

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

He was to look into our lives?

Would he stop and weep for what he saw?

Let us Pray...