

Sermon - 03-28-21
Ps 118; Phil 2:5-11; Mark 11:1-11
Palm Sunday

The Donkey

By G.K. Chesterton

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.
With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.
The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.
Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

(Source: *The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton* (Dodd Mead & Company, 1927) (Poetry Foundation website) accessed 03-19-21)

We smile at donkeys, because they are small and stubborn and cute. They bray and buck and won't do what you want them to when you want them to. Remind you of anybody?

In the prophetic tradition, Jesus Messiah rode a young donkey into Jerusalem as He was to become King of the Universe – and to be revealed as the Worthy Lamb. John of Patmos writes what he heard the heavenly choir sing: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” (Rev 5:12)

That parade into the city the week before His Passion includes people cutting green branches to lay on the road and to wave in the air, singing “Hosanna to the Son of David,” as the King rides in. It is a religious festival and a national tradition. He does not come as a conqueror on an armored horse, with sword, ready for battle.

Listen to The Prophet Zechariah:
Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zech 9:9 NASB)

“Donkeys are not among the most beautiful of God’s creatures. To be called a donkey is not a flattering thing. Yet a poor, lowly donkey became the throne of Jesus as he entered triumphantly into Jerusalem. This humble entrance fulfills the old prophecy that the Messiah would come into Jerusalem riding on a donkey.” Father Pablo

(PATHEOS WEBSITE)

As the lowly *burro* is a Christ-bearer, so you and I carry the Lord in our hearts as we make this journey of life. When we do, we share His glory – and His humility with everyone we meet.

(Continued on next page.)

Think back to how the children of Israel called out to the Lord in their slavery. So, Moses was born and was shielded and protected to become a savior to God's people. Then, the Almighty appeared to his man in a burning bush. God said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt; and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So, I have come down to deliver them..." (Ex 3:7-8) This is the ancient picture of God's compassion and love for His people – working through a mortal man.

We learned very early in the saga of God and God's people that He always faithfully makes His way to us. Nothing can stop or even slow the fulfillment of His divine will to save us.

Here is the paradox – the eternally begotten Son of Almighty God empties Himself and becomes a frail human whose life can be extinguished easily with one blow. On Good Friday, all eyes see the utter humbling of this gentle man from Nazareth. His critics and enemies say, "Well, good-bye to this would-be Savior!" Jesus carries His own instrument of torture up the hill to the place of execution. There He willingly submits. He is the sacrifice.

But, at the Triumphal Entry the previous week, what we call today Palm Sunday, we see an enactment: The eternal Son of God is welcomed into the City of God – Zion – the New Jerusalem.

You and I, every time we bow down to pray, we welcome the King of Glory into the gates of a world transformed by His presence.

He does not come crashing in – to overpower the world by force. Rather, He rides in on the most humble of creatures.

Jesus is making His way toward the gates of the city in the eternal now. Our senses cannot detect His approach. Yet, as the Apostle Paul says, we live in expectation of Christ's arrival. Paul writes: "For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free. For it was by hope that we were saved; but if we see what we hope for, then it is not really hope. Who of us hopes for something we see? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (Ro 8:22-25)

Today we celebrate the Triumphal Entry of Messiah. Jesus coming to deliver us and all of creation.

During this Holy Week take plenty of time to welcome the King of Glory! Amen.