

“The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!” ” John 12:12-13 (NIV)

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus riding on a donkey, is one of the most joy filled moments in the bible. As you read the passage you can feel the joy and anticipation. The long awaited Messiah has finally come to save Israel. Except Jesus isn't the type of Saviour they're expecting. People are very good at looking at the short term, the here and now issues in their lives, and don't necessarily see the bigger picture. They want to be saved from the Romans who have occupied their land and desecrated it with foreign gods. They want a warrior type hero that will swoop in and return the land to it's people so they can return to living their lives how they always have.

Jesus isn't this type of messiah though. Jesus know's the bigger, more widespread picture. A picture that spreads beyond their little section of the globe and right out through the past, present and future of the entire world. Although we know that this picture of joy turns sour when the crowds change their tune and cry out “Crucify Him!”, for today we will just focus on the joy of that moment and what it means for us today.

Jesus rides a humble donkey - an animal often used still today for carrying heavy loads for people's livelihoods. A working animal, yet the people, probably without even really knowing why, are greeting him as a king. Jesus certainly made waves and touched the lives of many through his miracles and parables and is still touching lives today. But there is more to donkeys than just working animals. Go to a Donkey Sanctuary and you will see they are all as individual as humans. They all have unique personalities. Some like to play rough, some are really gentle and love human touch, others only want to spend time with their friends and may be shy about interacting with new faces. Jesus has chosen an animal that is understanding as his mode of transport for this journey. How beautiful that an animal usually used for work gets to carry God's son into Jerusalem. Admittedly, its still work for the Donkey, but honourable work.

Today we can take this passage as more than just a story read at the end of Lent and perhaps begin to think about how we can carry that joy into our lives and out into the world. Sometimes we may feel like working animals, carrying the heavy loads of being financially responsible for paying bills etc. and perhaps that all feels a bit much sometimes, but God has chosen each one of us and that is worth rediscovering the joy of life for.

Pray;

Lord God, We thank you that you choose the working people and animals to be a part of your plan. Thank you that your entry into Jerusalem brought out a sense of overwhelming joy and anticipation for the things to come. It may not have been obvious straight away but thanks that you are always ready to take those who are obedient to you - man or beast - and work with them. May we learn to feel that joy and anticipation of Palm Sunday and to bring it into our lives, whether we work as a CEO or a Carer, a cleaner or we are unemployed. Whatever place you have positioned us, help us to never forget you. Amen.