

Jesus on the Donkey

Matthew 21:1-18

I love the theatre of this, the show, the parade,
Because from Jesus it is so unusual.

Up until this point he has been trying to keep things quiet
He heals someone - don't tell anyone that you've been healed
The demons cry out - we know who you are - he orders them silent
The disciples realise he is the Messiah - do not tell anyone this

But now,
He says to the disciples
He want a donkey
I want a donkey and a colt in Matthew
And the theatre of this
Go and untie one that's never been ridden,
And just take it
Untie it,
And if anyone asks - just say "The Master needs it"

This is Jesus at his most miracle making
He never normally does this.
He doesn't pull rank unless he has to
But this time he does
He's not holding back any more
Because he's going to Jerusalem,
And this needs to be done right.. with all the show, with the parade, with the prophecies
coming to fruition.

Why now for the parade?

Well it's not showing off, if that's who you really are...
He wants to be seen,
He wants people to know.

But he wants people to know that there is something about this Messiah
He wants them to see the donkey and that this is all a bit different.
He's doing a double thing here
He's doing the king thing, he's doing the miraculous requisitioning of transport thing, so
he's showing that he's in charge, he's got a hold of these people,
All the universe is his
But he's going to use that great, unprecedented power
To march into Jerusalem on a donkey

There is something here about not needing to flex
When you know who you truly really are.

And there is also something here about all the prophecies coming to life
What Jesus is doing is taking all the history of the Jews
Including all the recent history of the Jews that we don't know so much about
The riding of Joseph Maccabees who had a procession like this.
And the prophecies of Zechariah about the king on a donkey
And the story of the Psalms - particularly about Psalm 118, which is the great psalm - the
Hallel psalm, it's the psalm of hope and expectation.

He takes them into himself
All of history is being brought in here,
Condensed and held in this man.

All human hope
All human power
All human humility
Held in this man.

And he wants us to see it,
He wants it to be seen in Jerusalem
Because Jerusalem has had too long of looking elsewhere for her kings.

There is something about Jerusalem - as all capital cities do - but particularly this capital
city which sees its important, but does not see its need of being saved,
Does not see that it is doing what it no longer does.

All of this needs to see the king on the donkey

Who for once is using his power.

This is why you get the conversation of the folks in Jerusalem saying
"Who is this?"

And the people from outside travelling with him saying

"This is Jesus the prophet, the one from Galilee, the one from Nazareth" the place you
have never even heard of, the backwater, him.

The king from Auchtermuchty, the place from Applecross, from Scrabster, from
Fionnphort, from Port Asking, from Newton Stewart, from Coldstream
That's the shock of it.

Because he is coming in to upset everything we think is important,
And the place he goes to is the very centre of the world,
To temple.

To the very centre of our world,

And he having disturb us on the streets

He is doing to upset us in the centre, in the very heart of things,

Because the heart is broken

And it needs the king to come in on the donkey.

Make no mistake

This is a victory march

We don't like victories - we don't build arc-de-triomphe now

Or we don't march in parades

Because we know that wars leave in their legacy further wars

And we know the victors will one day have their biographies written and we will discover
the difference between the story we are told and what actually happened

This is a victory parade, of a different of victory,

It is the victory over sin and the darkness of this world

It is a victory of the poison that threatens the human heart

It is a victory over the forces of false religion,

There is something deeply cosmic that is going to happen here in the very heart of God.

And this is an attack on the temple,

You have to understand that to the Jewish mind, the temple was the universe,

It was the idea that a small thing could represent a big thing.

So the temple is the universe,
There is a picture of the temple in the psalms where it says
"All of it glorifies God"
Just as all of the universe is to glorify God.

So if the temple is a place where the lame and sick are not healed
Then the universe is also that place

If the temple is a place where people are to pray, but it has been taken over by thieves
Then that is a portrait of the universe where that has happened

And if the temple is a place where children sing to their God
Then the universe is a place where that has happened

And if the temple is a place where the religious have become obsessed with the
question of who does not belong
Then the universe is too preoccupied with that question

And all of it he does away with
In his victory parade
Because those things are his enemy

And he will move the temple inside
Into him
Into us

That is what is going on on Palm Sunday
A victory parade for the opening up of the human heart

AMEN