

**SERMON:** 20 April 2016 (Palm Sunday)

**(Bible Reading:** Luke 19:37-42)

Can you imagine Queen Elizabeth entering a city on a donkey?

What do you think the press would make of that? Well, I can almost put my head on a block saying: they will most certainly have a field day with the sensational news and yes, I think a lot of people would find it quite humorous!

The same was true of Jesus' day. The Roman Emperor would not enter a city on a donkey. It would be with a large army on horseback with all their medals and military clothing, accompanied by a large band playing triumphant music.

But now the followers of Jesus who did not realise his true identity till the end and some other Jews thought of Him as a king who will deliver them from the Roman oppression. It seems as if Jesus is giving them a glimpse of who He truly is. He is not an earthly king. He rides on a donkey like officials usually did. He is the heavenly king of peace, glory and love. He was not interested in earthly glory or show. He came as a servant to serve others, to bring peace and reconciliation with God.

Then as Jesus came closer to Jerusalem the people started to put their outer clothing on the road as an act of reverence like the people did in the Old Testament when Jehu was declared as king. Luke makes no mention of the spreading of branches, perhaps due to the nationalistic overtones of such an act. It could have been interpreted by the Roman authority as a rebellion because, in the history of Israel when the people rebelled against the Syrian oppression and their invasion of the temple, a bloody rebellion followed. After they took back the temple they "cleansed" it and made it holy again on the same day that it was defiled. It all happened on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev or December.

During the festival that followed - people carried Palm branches while singing praise to God. I can understand why Luke did not include the "palm branches" as a possible interpretation or pointer to a rebellion!

Jesus stood for peace. Ironically He cries about the predicament of the city of Jerusalem who could not see Him as the bearer of peace between God and the human race.

Holy week is about Jesus on His journey to bring final peace and reconciliation between God and us. Holy Week is about God who sacrificed Himself so that we can live forever with Him in peace. You and I have received this peace. Let us live it and share it with everyone around us. Holy Week is about the donkeys that we sometimes become in the modern day Church because no one else is interested in helping.

May God be with us as we journey with Him this week. And to all those who feel that they are real donkeys doing everything in the Church, rejoice and be happy. The Lord has called you for His special service. Amen.