

Can I ask all of you to please give a good cheer to the children when the door opens and they come into the church? I will go and lead them now into the church to the front...

Now children what was your reaction when you came into the church? Was it nice that everyone cheered and clapped and showed how excited they were? Yes it can be a bit daunting as well...

You know what exactly the same thing happened with Jesus a long time ago. He entered Jerusalem and all the people were so excited to see Him. Why? Well to most He was the expected king that would help them to have better lives. They could not understand that He came to establish the kingdom of heaven and not the earthly kingdom. He came to take all their sins away and give them a new relationship with God the Father. So in the end – in only a few days the mood totally changed. Instead of cheering Jesus, they shouted that He should be crucified. I am sure you saw the cross outside the church – can you imagine how hard it must have been for Jesus to die on that cross so that you and I can live without sin. Yes actually it should have been you and me because we sin and do and say bad things all the time. But Jesus took it away and made sure that if we believe in Him, we are saved. Now I want you to write your names on these crosses...so that you can remember why Jesus died. He died for you and me...

Now I want you to write down one of your friends names..

Can I ask each one of you to walk to any pew and stick your crosses on the end bit with blue tag?

I want you to remember that this is the message of Easter, Jesus died but He also rose from death and went to heaven to prepare for us a new kingdom. Every time you walk into this church and you see your name on a cross, remember you are saved!

Reflection

The text verses of the reflection are:

4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

5 "Say to Daughter Zion,

'See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

I have said it before that Matthew is very fond of quoting from the Old Testament because his first readers were Jews and knew the Old Testament by heart. In our reading he uses Psalm 118, and the prophecy of Zechariah chapter 9 and 14.

As they approached the village of Bethphage Jesus send two disciples ahead to get him a donkey and its colt. Bethphage was a small village just to the east of Jerusalem on or near the Mount of Olives, which dominated the skyline of that side of town.

It is also interesting that in Matthew's account the disciples find a donkey and its foal. I agree with some researchers who pointed out that a foal can be better handled when its mother is close by! Maybe Matthew was just more realistic in his account. But the point and emphasis is: Jesus is riding into Jerusalem not on a horse like an earthly king but on a donkey as a humble servant who came to serve!

But despite the fact that Jesus entered Jerusalem as a humble servant, the crowds expected more. The crowd immediately acknowledges and praises Jesus as the Son of David, as the expected Messiah, the one who will free them from Roman oppression.

No wonder Matthew makes the overstatement that the whole Jerusalem was stirred and asking just one question namely who was this man! I think Matthew is trying to tell us that the whole scene of the people throwing clothes and branches of trees on the road was quite unusual. It happened just once in the Old Testament in 2 Kings 9:13 with King Jehu.

However, when Jesus entered Jerusalem He emphasized his intentions and goal. He did not climb on a horse to fight or challenge the Roman empire. He did not climb on a horse to be the expected new king of the Jews. He climbed on a donkey, the most placid animal on this earth.

Have you ever rode on a donkey?

I have not. Why? Well in South Africa it is common knowledge if you really want to struggle, you saddle up a donkey. They are the most stubborn creatures you can think of. And they do just what they want. I have seen how people tried to steer them in one direction for them to go on another. Despite all the hassle, they are so slow. A famous poet and politician, Langenhoven in South Africa caused great offense in Parliament once when, he yelled out in frustration: "Half of this parliament are donkeys!" The Speaker immediately demanded he retract his angry statement, so Langenhoven complied: "All right, Mister Speaker. Half of this parliament are not donkeys."

There is no way someone can go to war or any fighting with a donkey. You will end up fighting your own donkey!

So what is the message? Jesus practised what He preached. He preached love, and showed love. He preached peace and climbed on a donkey.

Do our actions dictate what we preach? Or do our sermons dictate our actions?

I mean to say, do we proclaim the love of Jesus everywhere we go, by including all the "other people" that are living on the margins of our society, those that are so different from us, those who does not come to church, those who are addicted, those who have a different sexuality than we have, those who look and talk

differently. Or do we proclaim love and climb on our high horses to stake off or claim our own authority over others!

Peace is a verb. To have or reach peace often means hard work and sacrifice just like Jesus showed all through his life on earth. If we want peace in our villages, in our houses, in our lives, in our fellowship we need to work at it. We need to watch what we say, and do and how we do it. We need to climb off our high horses that we so much love and climb on a donkey by means of speaking.

So although donkeys have a negative connotation, we need to be riding on donkeys by ways of speaking this Holy Week. We need to live, and proclaim the inclusive message of love of Jesus. We need to work hard for peace in all our relations not only this week but every moment of every day. We need to show patience with one another and accept one another in love and peace.

May we carry the message of Jesus' peace as we ride hopefully on our "donkeys" through Holy week! May we be a true example of what Jesus came for namely to proclaim the Good news of God's kingdom that is open for any and everyone who has faith...and may we not forget God only needs a second for us to confess He is Lord of all!

Amen

Responding to God's word

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MP 242: "Hosanna, hosanna"**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: John Young

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Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

Let us follow our Jesus, our King and our Saviour:
let us sing of his goodness and shout him our praise,
let us hold to him firmly, recall how he suffered,
let us live his forgiveness and peace all our days.

Sung Amen