

McCabe United Methodist Church
Just An Ordinary Donkey
Matthew 21:1-11: March 31 and April 1, 2012 (Palm/Passion Sunday)
Pastor Rick Fossum

I love a good parade. I love the marching bands, the old cars, the floats and those funny little guys driving those funny little cars.

In our Scripture lesson today, we heard about a parade. It wasn't a big parade. It was just one person riding on a donkey kind-of-parade. It was the very first Palm Sunday parade. Jesus was the main and only attraction except for the donkey he was riding and her little colt.

I've always thought that the donkey was a funny choice. Why didn't Jesus ride on something a little more regal or dignified like a mighty war horse or a big old snarling camel or maybe even an elephant? Yes, an elephant would have been better than a donkey.

There's nothing wrong with a donkey. I like donkeys. It's just that donkeys aren't glamorous. They're funny looking. You never saw John Wayne riding a donkey in a parade or Hopalong Cassidy or Roy Rogers. They just don't convey a message of power or authority or strength or anything else and maybe . . . just maybe this is why Jesus chose the donkey in the first place.

I don't think Jesus was trying to convey a message of power or authority or strength. It was the exact opposite. He was born in a stable and not in some sparkling clean hospital. He was born a carpenter's son without a silver spoon in his mouth. He barely owned the clothes on his back . . . even the donkey he rode was borrowed.

And so, Jesus chose the donkey. He was very specific. He sent two disciples with these orders, **“Go to the village ahead of you and you'll find a donkey tied there, with her colt. Untie them and bring them to me.”**

Little did this donkey know that she would be carrying the Son of God . . . the Savior of the World . . . Jesus Christ.

And so the donkey, whether she wanted to or not, played a prominent role in the story of Jesus and his final week.

We don't know how long the parade lasted or how many blocks they walked, but the donkey was there to see the crowd of people throwing their coats and jackets on the road in front of them and palm branches to. The donkey was there to hear the crowd shouting things like: **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**

Hosanna in the highest heaven.”

And then the parade was over. I imagine Jesus went one way and the donkey and her little colt went back to their donkey business as usual. We don't know what happened to this donkey or her colt after the parade. I did hear a story about the colt. I'm not sure if it's true or not, but the story goes like this:

The little colt woke up the next morning. Her mind was still on yesterday's parade. The parade had been the most exciting day of her young life. She felt such a rush of pleasure and pride as she walked along the road with her mother and Jesus. People were watching her. They were throwing palm branches on the road for them to walk on. Palm branches! The little colt could hardly believe it.

And so the next day, maybe it was a Monday, the little colt decided she would have her own little parade, but this time, she'd walk by herself.

The little colt walked into town and found a group of people standing near the road just like before. They were talking. The little colt thought to herself, **“I'll walk by them and let them throw their coats on the road for me to walk on.”**

But, they ignored the little colt. The crowd of people kept on talking as if the little colt didn't exist. The colt shouted at them, in colt talk of course, **“Hey, throw down your coats like you did yesterday.”** Nothing happened. **“Don't you know who I am,”** the colt asked? She was kind of upset.

They just ignored her. Finally, someone slapped her across the tail and told her to go home.

“Miserable heathens,” the little colt muttered to herself. **“I'll just walk over to the next block where the good people live. They will remember me.”**

But the same thing happened. No one paid any attention to the little colt as she strutted down the road. **“The palm branches! Where are the palm branches,”** she shouted? Again, in colt language. **“Yesterday, you threw palm branches on the road! Come on!”** But still, nothing!

The poor little colt turned around and went home to her mother. Her mother, remember, was the donkey. The mother listened as her little colt told her story about having a parade, but no one paid her any attention.

The mother gently said, **“O you foolish little colt. Don't you realize that without**

him, you're just an ordinary little colt!"

And actually, this is today's message. Jesus used an ordinary donkey, with her ordinary little colt, to ride in the very first Palm Sunday parade. This is just like Jesus.

From his own ordinary disciples to ordinary people like you and me, Jesus chooses the common and ordinary to get things done in the world.

In fact, if we look for Jesus riding a mighty war horse or hanging around the rich and famous, or living in mansions and palaces, we're likely to miss seeing him.

He uses people like all of us to accomplish his work. I'm sure he could have done things differently, but for some reason he chose us to help him. In fact, without us, not much gets done when it comes to building the kingdom of God.

Erasmus was a 17th century critic of the church. He didn't like what he saw happening in the world. It was kind of like today. He blamed Christians and their lack of faith. He said, **"serving Christ for too many Christians was not a high priority."**

He liked to tell this story. You might have heard it. After Jesus returned to heaven from his time on earth, all the angels gathered around him to hear his stories. Jesus told them about his miracles, his teachings, about the places he had seen, and about his death on the cross, and his resurrection.

The angel Michael raised his hand. **"Jesus,"** he said, **"what will happen to the earth people now? And what about the church? What will happen to the church now that you're gone? And who will help build your kingdom?"**

Jesus answered, **"I have left behind my disciples. Both men and women, young and old, who will carry on my work. They will be the ones to keep my message alive and they'll be the ones who will build my kingdom."**

"But," Michael asked, **"what if these disciples fail? Do you have another plan?"**

And Jesus replied, **"I have no other plan . . . just my disciples."**

We already knew this, didn't we? Without us, the kingdom of God doesn't get built. Without us, the Good News of Jesus Christ doesn't get told.

This is the beginning of holy week. It's that time of year when we remember the last few days of Jesus' life. We remember Judas and how he betrayed Jesus. We remember his

arrest in the garden. We remember Peter's denial and the Jewish court that found him guilty. We remember how the disciples ran away from Jesus when he needed them the most. We remember Pilate's decision to have Jesus crucified. And we remember . . . we remember the cross he died on.

And he did it for us. He did it for the forgiveness of your sins and mine. He did it because of God's great love for all of us.

Our response should be this: **“Lord Jesus, never again. You can count on us, your ordinary and common disciples, to keep your message alive and to help build your kingdom here on earth.”**

Do I hear an amen?