

Palm Sunday: Choosing Jesus' Way

10 April 2022

Reading: Luke 19:28-40

I used to have a little bronze badge with the letters W W J D inscribed on it. It was given to me by a kind parishioner. Does anyone know what the letters W W J D stand for?

Yes, that's right, "What would Jesus do?" The idea is that when faced with decisions throughout the day you ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" And you have your answer.

But another question raised by those letters is "What would Jesus drive?" There are a lot of contenders in the Bible. In the Old Testament, we are told the sound of Moses' Triumph could be heard throughout the hills. And in Deuteronomy 16:10 we are encouraged to bring our tribute to the Lord. That's a Mazda Tribute. But the winner is a Honda. This is because in Acts we read that the disciples were all in one Accord. And Jesus is very humble about his Honda in John 12:49 when he says, "For I did not speak of my own Accord."

Today we do not have to ask what Jesus drove. On Palm Sunday we know exactly what Jesus drove - he comes riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. But why did he choose a donkey?

To answer that question, we need some context. Jesus is riding in from the east over the Mount of Olives. While on the other side of Jerusalem another procession is taking place. In the west Pontius Pilate is marching in with all the might of Rome. He has come from his summer palace and brings with him all the latest modern armoury. He would have been astride a mighty war horse, ahead of him the standard of the Roman empire, an eagle, and with him hundreds, maybe thousands, of soldiers armed to the teeth literally crushing the locals on the way. We don't need much imagination to think of a similar procession in our day. Think of the 40km long procession of tanks and artillery that advanced on Ukraine.

Meanwhile in the east Jesus has organized a little donkey to ride. It would be like a grown man riding on a tricycle. He has families and children playing around him and he is gently smiling and laughing.

The reason Jesus chose a donkey is to mock, to take the mickey, to parody the might of Rome. Jesus is a holy jester. Pontius Pilate would have gotten to his platform and looked over ten thousand poor people in tents arriving in the valley outside Jerusalem for Passover. Josephus, a historian and eyewitness, estimated 2 million people came to Jerusalem for Passover. Is it little wonder that Pontius Pilate is so angry with Jesus? The biggest fear he had, apart from humiliation, would have been a riot the Romans couldn't control. With such a following among the poor of the tent city Jesus would have been a threat.

Jesus is a holy fool, and he is offering us not one procession but two. His procession is one of fun, laughter of children and families and caring. The Roman's one is one of power, of might and of fear. Jesus is the master of the enacted sign. His whole life was like a living sacrament. An outward sign of an invisible grace.

We are the ones that choose to follow, not the might of Rome or Russia, but a humble Savior carried on a little donkey. Our donkey this morning is Edmund, brother of the famous wonky donkey. A humble donkey, a towel, a bowl, bread, wine, a wooden cross, nails driven deep into hands and feet. A stone rolled away, empty grave clothes. These are the symbols of this week, love indeed. This is Jesus.

We call this week, beginning today, Holy because it can transform us to be more like Jesus, and to know the difference his love can make in our lives.

I meet people every day who have had their lives transformed by this Jesus.

I was chatting to a woman after a funeral. She works in a bank. She was always a bit grumpy with customers. She didn't really see the point and she dreaded her employment reviews. She worried that in the next round of restructuring she would find herself down the road. Then she became a Christian. The boss called her in. She thought this is it! This is the 'Don't come Monday' talk. "I wanted to say how well you are dealing with the customers." the boss said, "I don't know what has changed for you, but keep it up."

The ultimate symbol of the transforming love of God is the cross. Thanks to Diane and her wonderful team of palm cross makers we will, at the conclusion of the service, bless the crosses and you can take one home to use it as a reminder of this week and of all Jesus did for us. You might want to keep it in your pocket.

A Cross in My Pocket

© Mrs. Verna Mae Thomas

I carry a cross in my pocket
A simple reminder to me
Of the fact that I am a Christian
No matter where I may be.
This little cross is not magic,
Nor is it a good luck charm
It isn't meant to protect me
From every physical harm.
It's not for identification
For all the world to see
It's simply an understanding
Between my Savior and me.
When I put my hand in my pocket
To bring out a coin or a key
The cross is there to remind me
Of the price He paid for me.

It reminds me, too, to be thankful
For my blessings day by day
And to strive to serve Him better
In all that I do and say.
It's also a daily reminder
Of the peace and comfort I share
With all who know my Master
And give themselves to His care.
So, I carry a cross in my pocket
Reminding no one but me
That Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life
If only I'll let Him be.

**Jesus chose a donkey to mock the might of Rome. May we follow him through this week
and have our lives transformed by love.**