

28th March 2021:

Palm Sunday - Jesus comes to Jerusalem as king

(Luke 19:28-38)

We have been on a journey with Doctor Luke, haven't we?

His story started with angels coming to tell John's Dad that he was to have a son. Zechariah then couldn't speak for 9 months! Then he blurted out loads of stuff about the one to come. And that one to come was Jesus. The angel also told Mary, "you're going to have God's son" and she said "yes". Zechariah was in Jerusalem, the big city in the south. Mary was in the north.

Luke's story moves from north to south, just like Mary and Joseph had to. From their home in the north, in Nazareth, to Bethlehem, just outside Jerusalem, in the south. And that's where the gospel, the good news, all began, with baby Jesus. Do you remember that at Christmas time?

Afterwards they all go home again and Jesus is brought up in Nazareth, in the north. Luke doesn't say much about the next 30 years. Just a couple of childhood stories. Nothing more.

Jesus started his ministry, his time bringing God's message, in Galilee, around the big lake, in the north. Then, after a while, he "set his face to Jerusalem". He didn't just go there, he travelled on this journey, from place to place, teaching, answering questions and telling stories. Healing people and letting them know all about the kingdom of God.

Gradually he moved south, through Judea, towards Jerusalem. But not a straight line. He travelled south, then east, to Perea, which is to the east of Jerusalem. In our reading today, we see him approaching Jerusalem again, from the east.

Through Bethany. Then Bethphage. And now, in our story, on the mount of olives, across the narrow valley from Jerusalem itself. You can see the view he would have had, behind me. Can you see Jerusalem in the distance?

Jesus saw *his* destination. Its not far. They *could* walk it. They have walked this far. But Jesus has a different plan.

The people expected a King to come and free them from the Romans who had invaded their country. Hundreds of years before another Zechariah (not te one who couldn't speak for nine months!) had predicted that a king was coming. Kings usually came on war horses or in grand carriages. But said Zechariah, this king would come on a donkey.

The people expected the one who would come and save them to come as a great warrior on a huge war horse.

God had other ideas.

This part of the journey, down the mountain, needed a lowly pack animal. Useful for descending mountains but not so impressive as the horse the mighty warrior would ride!

The journey continued down the mountain and into the city. Zechariah had also predicted this mountain as the place where they would see their "Messiah", the one who God would send to save them. It all adds up.

The people shout "blessed is the one king who comes in the name of the Lord" just like they had hundreds of years before as the people approached the temple to worship.

This day, we call it Palm Sunday, is the start of what we call Holy Week. Holy means set apart for God. Pure. Good. God like. Honouring to him. And that's what Jesus' journey was, holy.

Jesus entered the city on Sunday. By Thursday he ate his last meal and was arrested. By Friday he was dead on a cross. Three days later he rose again. And we will celebrate on *that* day. This is a journey with a happy destination. At least this is stop along the way, for we are still on that journey with him, by his Holy Spirit.

But wait, we have missed an important bit of the story.

Wasn't the donkey stolen?!

Let's go back and see.

On the mountain he sent two friends ahead of him into the village. See a colt? Untie it. Bring it to me..were Jesus' instructions. (Colt can mean a young donkey).

It's not their colt. Anyone seeing this would think that they were stealing it!!

Jesus has of course thought of this. "If anyone asks you, say "The Lord needs it""

And that is exactly what happened. Someone did ask. And that is just what they said.

In those days if a very important person needed something to carry on their work they could just take it. This tells us that Jesus is a very important person.

Now that got me thinking.

The colt became part of the journey of Jesus. It did work for Jesus. Had a special place in Jesus' story. While it was tied up it could play no part in Jesus' work. It could not make an impact for him. But once untied and taken to him, it could play its part, just like God had planned.

How can we be part of God's plan? Of Jesus' continuing journey in the world, through us? Maybe we need to be untied, released. And when we are, if anyone were to ask, the answer would be "The Lord needs me".

The last year has been very hard for many people. Jesus wants us to make a difference in people's lives. Here are three things we can all be "*untied to do for Jesus*" whatever our age –

The Lord needs you:

1. Smile – bring joy to others
2. Listen – to their struggles and concerns
3. Pray – simply – Lord I lift X to you, please have mercy on them.

Shall we try that now. Just close our eyes, think of someone that we know is having a bit of a hard time and pray "Lord I lift this person to you, please have mercy on them".

Tomorrow, shall we go and do some smiling, to cheer people up and listening to how people are feeling, so that we can pray some more?

Let's go.....

²⁸ After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany **at the hill called the Mount of Olives**, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them,

³⁰ 'Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, **you will find a colt tied there**, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" say, "**The Lord needs it.**"'

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.

³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?'

³⁴ They replied, '**The Lord needs it.**'

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, **threw their cloaks on the colt** and put Jesus on it.

³⁶ As he went along, people **spread their cloaks on the road.**

³⁷ When he came near the place where the **road goes down the Mount of Olives**, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ '**Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!**'

'**Peace** in heaven and **glory** in the highest!'

