

**Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family****Title: Jesus on the Donkey****Lesson: Mark 11:1-11 NRSV**

<sup>1</sup> When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup> and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" <sup>4</sup> They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, <sup>5</sup> some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup> They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. <sup>7</sup> Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna!

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*

<sup>10</sup> *Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

<sup>11</sup> *Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.*

Lent finally reached its peak with the suffering of the Lord and the passion of the Lord. The following week from today is called Holy Week. And, from the afternoon of Good Friday to the dawn of Easter, deep darkness and despair last for three days.

Although the Holy Week is filled with a heavy atmosphere, Jesus' steps into Jerusalem are cheerful. In addition, it is intimate in that the main character that has Jesus on his back is a young colt. One of the things I realized while preparing for today's message is that colt and donkey in the Bible indicates the same animal. Except this, the Bible sometimes describes the colts as faithful companions.

For example, it was the donkey that carried Isaac to be sacrificed. (Gen 22:3); the donkey carried Moses' family when they went back to the land of Egypt. (Exod 4:20); the donkey saw an angel of the Lord Balaam couldn't see. (Numbers 22:30); There was Oded's donkey which carried out a peaceful mission during the war. (2 Chron 28:15); and it was also the donkey of the good Samaritan which carried the man attacked by robbers. (Luke 10:34)

But, the most famous donkey is the donkey carrying Jesus on his back. (Mark 11:7 & John 12:14) Jesus, who rode on the donkey's back, came to the earth as the king of all kings and the servant of all servants. The image of Jesus, who entered Jerusalem on the young donkey's back, far from glamour, shows the humble and gentle nature of the Lord.

Imagine Messiah riding a donkey. Maybe it looked ridiculous to people. A nice horse draws people's attention and people look up to the rider. However, the young colt is small and would have been similar in height to standing people and the rider. The march of Jesus, who rode the young donkey in the crowd, was not very fancy.

The Gospel emphasizes that God's work is different from human common sense and tradition. So God wanted to use a donkey that people don't want to use. In the book of Zechariah 9:9, the prophet proclaims that God is humble saying "Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Even though it is an unattractive donkey, it symbolizes Messiah's authority. The colt has the opposite image of the horse. Horse means war, but donkey means peace. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was not to win the world, but to lose by the world.

According to Christian tradition, servants of Christ were often likened to donkeys. In other words, all the servants for the gospel have to do is convey peace to the world like the donkey. Their duties were heavy and difficult, but God promised them the grace and the joy of God. The Lord uses their gentle and humble character. That's why global volunteer organizations use colts as their symbolic animals.

There is a unique black pattern on the chest between the robust shoulders of the colt. People regarded this pattern as a reward for the hard work of the donkey who served Jesus humbly. It is an honorable cross marker given to a donkey.

Above all, it was God's way to choose a humble and small donkey. Palm Sunday is Hosanna's day to dream of a world filled with such donkeys. May we also be apostles of peace used by God like the donkeys. Thanks be to God! Amen.