

I'm not sure that Donald Trump would fly coach with only inches of leg room. I don't know that Bill Gates would want to drive himself around in a royal blue '90 Mercury Topaz. I don't think T Boone Pickens wants to be seen taking the train to work. These people are used to certain modes of travel. They're used to being treated like royalty when it comes to getting around. The rest of us would take their travel arrangements for a while, limos, private jets, and yachts. We'd get used to traveling in style.

Jesus traveled around Judea and Galilee almost exclusively by foot power. He was rarely alone, but the group with him wasn't exactly kings and queens. They were fishermen and tax collectors, prostitutes and formerly demon-possessed people. Not high class people at all. People who saw Jesus hanging out with these kinds of people couldn't picture him having any important task and role.

The gospel describes for us a moment when Jesus decides another mode of travel is necessary. The great city Jerusalem stands just two miles away. After three years of walking this last distance won't be covered by foot. No one knows it yet except Jesus, but this will be his last time entering the city. It calls for a special mode of transportation. A horse perhaps? A covered chariot? No, not for this king...

**This King rides a donkey  
Arrives in humility  
Conquers through suffering**

During these college basketball games it seems everyone has a keen sense of how much time is left. The announcers dwell on it, the players look up at the clock to see it, and the coaches are always rethinking strategy based on it. As the seconds tick down the play gets more frantic, chances are taken, and excitement builds especially for the team ahead. The clock on Jesus' life was quickly running down. It was Sunday, just days before Jesus would give his life; something he'd promised and talked about many times before. But no one seemed to remember.

The disciples were probably thinking about where he was headed. They couldn't believe he was going to Jerusalem. He had to know the danger. The religious leaders were probably thinking this would be a perfect time to arrest Jesus and kill him. The crowds thought about it too because they knew the threats. They were probably surprised Jesus wasn't staying safely away. Jesus was thinking about it too. That's why **"he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem."** He led the way. The time was right. Jesus was no victim of circumstance. He set the circumstances and made sure they happened just as God wanted.

Pilots live by checklists. Every step from the moment they arrive at the plane till they leave is governed by checklists. Everything needs completing or bad things can happen. Jesus lived that way too. His checklist was the Old Testament filled with prophecies about the Messiah. One particular prophecy said, **"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."** Jesus is going into Jerusalem, check. He will be riding a donkey, check. He's a king?

We like our superheroes powerful. Superman has super human strength. Spiderman jumps and get around with his spider webs. Iron Man has his special powered armor suit. They save the day and get special treatment. Not Jesus. Jesus wasn't concerned the crowd see him as humble. He wanted them to recognize why he arrived. He wanted them to see that he chose a donkey to ride in on. No horses or chariots, no fanfare or majesty, and no trumpets announcing a powerful ruler's arrival. A borrowed donkey, a beast of burden was his special mode of travel. But the donkey was the sign of something more. Kings don't ride donkeys. But this is no ordinary King. He's our King and he's riding a donkey.

King David's son Solomon once was paraded around town on a mule when he was made king. Now great David's greater son, the Son of man and the Son of God was riding a donkey. Jesus was a King. Immediately, **"They threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road."** Garments and palm branches signaled honor and praise. They recognized his miracles first, but now saw him on the donkey, riding into David's great city, and the connection was made. This was the Messiah.

He made the choice to ride the donkey. It was a choice away from power and prestige. But don't applaud Jesus because though he was rich he chose the cheaper transportation. Applaud him because he shows you just how you'll be saved. It won't be through power and majesty. It won't be with gold or diamonds to buy your freedom. It won't be with force. With humility he enters Jerusalem so that in grace he can share a loving message with you. He chooses to abstain from force so that you might love him by faith in his atoning blood. We need to see him the way those people did; humble yes, but still a King. Humble yes, but the Messiah who would save us. All that from someone riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Winners of major sports championships usually return home to a ticker tape parade thrown in their honor. Riding down Main Street the champions get treated to a real privilege. The entire city comes out to watch them come home with their trophies and awards for being the best. It must be an exciting thing to have all those people greeting you. Probably something you wouldn't want to end. Jesus could have gone from victory parade to victory parade. He could have kept that magical feeling going if he had just given the crowd what they wanted. But he didn't because he had other work to attend to. Jesus was a King showing himself humble. But he was also a King who would conquer through suffering.

As Jesus looked around at the faces in the crowd it's likely he could fast forward in his mind to what would happen on Friday. Some of the same faces that cheered his arrival on Sunday would be shouting for his death on Friday. And still Jesus marched on. He would allow the violence and injustice to be carried out against him. He would make himself low so he could raise himself and us up.

Palm Sunday is a day of contrasts. Jesus knows he's a King, yet he enters on a donkey. He knows he has all the power yet he forfeits using it all. He knows what's going to happen on Friday and still he enters. Don't miss that point. Don't focus on the shouts of praise. Don't think about how to keep it going so it never ends. Don't question why Jesus didn't try to avoid their evil intentions by staying away because that's what we would do. Don't look for another King just because this one doesn't fit the kind of king we want. Focus on Jesus' unflinching determination to go to the cross. Focus on your King doing what you and I needed him to. Focus on the love of Christ in action.

We've traveled with Jesus during another Lenten season arriving at another Palm Sunday. The palm processional reminds us that glory waits. We can't forget it. Our hearts have been prepared for six weeks to bring us to repentance. Now we watch Jesus enter Jerusalem on a beast of burden to bear our burden of sin. As the hymn just said, **Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. O Christ, your triumphs now begin over captive death and conquered sin.** This Savior suffered greatly. We'll watch him go through it again in a few short days. He's the Son of God and the Messiah. He was sent as the sacrificial Lamb of God. But through suffering comes the victory, through suffering he conquers. Pardon, peace, and salvation are the triumphs beginning now with a humble looking King riding a donkey.

Enjoy the moment. Savor the shouts of glory and praise. Remember that victory is coming. Don't avoid the suffering though. Join the crowd and shout, **"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"** Honor him for his humble entrance into Jerusalem. Praise him for his willingness to suffer and conquer for us. He is our King, and this King rides a donkey.