

The Donkey-King

Scripture Reading — Matthew 21:1-10

“See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey ...”
Matthew 21:5 —

Palm Sunday was Jesus’ earthly homecoming. Jerusalem was the royal city in two ways: as the city of Israel’s kings, and as the city of God.

Therefore it was Jesus’ city in two ways as well: as a descendent of King David whom the crowd wanted to crown as their king, and as the Son of God.

Jesus was double royalty.

In Jesus’ day a king on a donkey was about as fitting as royalty today being chauffeured in a Volkswagen Beetle. A king riding in a limousine would be more fitting—or perhaps in a tank with his military troops. In ancient times a king usually rode into his royal city on a war horse as a symbol of military might.

Why didn’t Jesus lead his people and his “troops” by riding a horse? Why did he ride a donkey?

In riding a donkey, Jesus was deliberately fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-10. God was not big on having Israel’s kings—his kings—riding on horseback. God wanted his kings to be kings of peace, not war. God did not want his kings proudly elevated, but to live as his humble servants who would lead his people in the ways of peace.

Jesus showed he was that kind of king—a donkey-king. And God wants us to be that kind of people—a humble, peaceful people—a donkey-people.

Prayer

Jesus, “you are the King of mercy and of grace, reigning omnipotent in every place; so come, O King, and our whole being sway,” fill us to live in your humble way. Amen.

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