

How do you spend your Sunday afternoons? Do you have some sort of get together with friends or family? Do you go out for brunch somewhere? Or maybe you go home, have some lunch, and take a nap. Or you are ambitious and go to the pool for a swim or go out and play 9 holes of golf. Jeanne and I usually go home after church on Sundays, I take a quick nap since I get up quite early on Sundays, and then we take a drive somewhere. Many times we end up down in the Fenney area of the Villages. We drive around and see all the new houses that are going up, golf courses built, new archery ranges, putt and plays, you name it. Years ago in Germany, the Germans had a big meal at lunchtime on Sundays, and then took a walking hike into some scenic area.

On a Sunday over 2000 years ago, someone was out and about on a Sunday. This person was taking a drive. Not with a car or fancy chariot. But rather riding on a donkey. And this was not just a sightseeing tour of new construction in the Villages. This drive was a life and death trip. Consider: Truly More Than Just a Sunday Drive.

When you and I are taking a road trip today, we have a specific reason for the trip. We are going to see family in the Mid-west. We are going to take a vacation to some site in another state. We know exactly why we are taking the road trip.

Jesus knew exactly why he was taking a road trip into Jerusalem. He did not go to demonstrate against the Romans. He did not go just to see friends. He did not go just to celebrate the Passover. Jesus went there to die. He had said to his disciples, "The Son of man will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." Jesus knew exactly what would happen to him.

Before taking a road trip, we make preparations. We make sure the car tire pressure is checked, oil changed if needed, and a full tank of gas. Before Jesus took his road trip to Jerusalem, he also did some preparations.

He approaches Bethphage and Bethany and tells two of his disciples, "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. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you bringing it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" Jesus wants the donkey to lead him through the crowds of people who will welcome him. Usually Jesus avoided the large crowds that wanted to make him a king. Now it is different. Now is the time, God's time, for Jesus to go to the cross. Thousands of people are crowding into Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. How fitting that Jesus gives his life as the Lamb of God on very time the Passover is celebrated. Determination was written all over his face. See the determination on the face of the fireman who runs into a burning building to save a child. Such determination was on the face of Jesus.

Jesus told them to go to the village and they would find a colt tied there. The colt would be there with its mother. How did Jesus know there would be a colt and its mother in the village nearby? How did he know the owner would give them permission to take the two donkeys? Here we see Jesus use his power as God to provide the young donkey he needed to ride into Jerusalem. Jesus knows all things just as God our heavenly Father knows all things. He saw the donkeys tied up. He knew the owner would let them borrow the donkeys when the disciples simply said, "The Lord has need of them." Jesus is in total control of the situation as he prepares to give his life for us.

Isn't it comforting to know that Jesus knows all things? If he knew that a donkey was waiting for him in the next town, he certainly knows what's down the road for you.

Therefore there is no need to worry about what tomorrow will bring because Jesus is already there. We can also trust that following his commands won't send us on a wild goose chase. Just as the disciples found the donkey as Jesus said they would, we can trust that when Jesus directs us to put our trust and faith in him for our eternal salvation and for our temporal good he will not let us down.

They brought the donkey to Jesus. Notice this is not just an ordinary donkey. It was the foal, a young colt. It had never been ridden before. They brought it to Jesus, put their clothes on its back and then put Jesus on it. Under all normal circumstances this donkey that had never been ridden would have bucked him. The huge crowds with all their singing and shouting and waving of clothes and palm branches would have caused it to throw off its rider and bolt away. But this is not an ordinary situation. This is Jesus, God's Son, our Savior, the Creator of the Universe miraculously riding this donkey into Jerusalem.

All of this was carefully planned for our salvation and also carefully planned to fulfill an amazing prophecy in Zechariah 9 where it says, "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." That prophecy predicted Jesus would ride on the colt, the foal of a donkey. It predicted in amazing detail that Jesus would bring us righteous and salvation. My greatest need is not to win over 300 million dollars in the recent lottery. My greatest need is to be righteous before God and have salvation. Jesus carefully prepares to go into Jerusalem to bring this salvation to us.

The crowds of people go in front of Jesus throwing down the cloaks they carried for traveling in front of Jesus. The gospel of John says they laid palm branches in front of Jesus, symbols of victory and triumph. It was their way of showing their respect and love for Jesus. It says, "The whole crowd began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen." There is a certain amount of anticipation and excitement as people share with each the miracles they have seen. Some are talking about family members and friends who were personally healed by Jesus. The people shout and sing to Jesus. No one had to tell them what to sing. The thousands of pilgrims coming from all over Israel were used to singing in their homes. They were ready to sing when they came to Jerusalem for worship. Everyone knew the words of Psalm 118 and so they sing, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." They sing "Hosanna" which means save us. Have you ever sang a tune to a song, and you didn't know the lyrics to the song. You just liked the tune. And then somebody said to you, "Did you realize that song that you just hummed, Puff the magic dragon lives by the sea, is really talking about getting high on marijuana?" You are shocked. I never realized that I was singing a song which dealt with marijuana.

So On Palm Sunday, people are singing a song, but they really didn't understand the lyrics they were singing. As he entered the city of Jerusalem, people were singing a song. "Hosanna!" they said. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" The word "Hosanna" means "Lord, save us!" Were these people asking Jesus to save them? Yes. Save them from what? Government oppression? Economic recession? Bouts of depression? Within that large crowd were the many who believed Jesus could do it all. Had he not raised people from the dead? Had he not fed 5000 with only five loaves and two fish? Save us Jesus. Make us successful and prosperous.

But Jesus had come to save us from our sins. He was going to establish a kingdom, but not a physical one. Jesus had come to establish spiritual peace – peace between you and God, peace that comes from having a clear conscience, peace in your heart – that is the kind of peace Jesus had come to establish. These people had no idea who Jesus really was, or what he was going to do for them.

Eventually, you will have to look Christ in the eye, after you pass away. What will he say to you? Will he say, “Why did you sing to me, but never believed in me as Savior and Lord? Why did you sing to me, but you never bothered to get to know me?” What will you say? Is this what your spiritual life is right now, singing hymns, but having no idea what you are singing? Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem to Save you and me from our sins. He is our Savior King. This is more Than a Sunday Drive in the country.

On this Palm Sunday I ask you to look at Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem. Look at the determination that is there on his face. He will not leave one stone unturned to save you, not one sin not paid for completely. Look at the head of Jesus. It will be crowned with a crown of thorns. Look at his hands. They are holding onto the little donkey to keep from falling, and yet these are the hands of God himself. These hands will be nailed to a cross for your sin and the sin of the world. He will keep the nail prints in his hands after he rises from the dead just to prove to you beyond any doubt that he has risen from the dead and that every sin is paid for completely.

How can we keep silent? If we keep silent as Jesus says, “The stones will cry out.” There is too much happening here. Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen to him. Jesus wanted to ride into Jerusalem on this lowly donkey to assure us this morning beyond any doubt that he will do everything necessary to earn our forgiveness and give us peace with God. I love Palm Sunday and I know you do also. Thank you King Jesus for riding into Jerusalem on a donkey so that we never forget how much you love us and care about us. Truly this was much more than just a Sunday drive. Amen.