

**SERMON FOR THE DIOCESE OF BUNBURY: 4/4/2023: PALM SUNDAY:  
GEOFF CHADWICK:  
Mk 11:1-10:  
"EXPECTING A THOROUGHBRED, WE GET A DONKEY:"**

The events of Palm Sunday are full of irony.

In the first piece of irony, we see Jesus, hailed as the Son of David, the expected great King and Messiah, arriving on a donkey, the lowest of the beasts of burden. A modern rendition of this symbolism would be for the Queen to arrive at the United Nations riding in a Mini. Maybe even a pink one! Irony indeed! The greatest of all arrives in the least and most humble of all ways.

On that first Palm Sunday, the crowd, expecting a thoroughbred get a donkey.

Perhaps this is an analogy of how Christ and God come to us today. Too often we look for God only in the great, magnificent, and impressive - don't get me wrong, God indeed does come in such things, but all too often we overlook the humble, the lowly and the ordinary. Expecting a thoroughbred, we don't even see the donkey. Let's look for God in the ordinary things of life. After all, that is what the Eucharist is all about. What could be more ordinary than breaking bread around a meal table?

In the second piece of irony, we hear the crowd yelling "Hosanna" which means "Save Now!" or "Help Now!" The great crowd, fired up with mass hysteria, call for the great prophet to rescue them from their cruel and oppressive Roman foes. The irony is that Jesus was to save them, but not "now". He did the saving later but in a way which could never have been anticipated. In the events of Holy Week the cries of "Save now!" become the demands of "Crucify him!"

Expecting a thoroughbred they missed the donkey.

Very often we want to be saved now. We can't wait, we've waited long enough, or we won't wait. Jesus had the power to "save now" but he didn't.

Can you imagine the pain that was in his heart knowing that he had to leave the people in their predicament, or leave himself in his own predicament for that matter? But you see, he knew one of the great lessons of life, that sometimes the best form of help is no help, or delayed help.

Jesus was to journey towards Golgotha without much help. Sometimes we too have to journey towards our own Golgothas without much help. But the comfort is that we know that Jesus has been there before us.

Wanting the magnificence of the thoroughbred, we often reject the humility of the donkey.

The third piece of irony occurs when the crowd proclaims "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" (Mk 11:9, NRSV). Less than one week later the same crowd declares

"Aha! you who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross... He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now so that we may see and believe" (Mk 15:31-32, NRSV).

Have you ever cursed someone because they didn't live up to your expectations?

Have you expected a thoroughbred and got a donkey?

Well you see, we're not much different to that crowd which gathered together on that first Palm Sunday. Expecting a victorious king they got a humble servant.

Jesus was not what they expected.

Perhaps we too, find God not to be what we expect?

We want a God who will cause all wars to cease, or a God who will cause the hungry to be fed, or to perform, just so he can prove to us that he exists. Instead, we get a

God who chooses to work through humanity, through us, acting as our servant rather than our taskmaster.

We get a God who chooses to journey through our darkness rather than dispense with it.

We get a God who humbles himself before us - perhaps getting our adulation and praise but also knowing that all too easily this becomes derision and cursing.

Expecting a thoroughbred, we get a donkey: but as the events of Easter Day will later tell us, the donkey is in fact the thoroughbred!

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**