

Children's Sermon for the Blessing of the Animals

St Michael and All Angels, Hall - 3rd October 2010

When it comes to the story of Jesus' life – which I believe is the most significant story in human history – animals were there at the beginning and towards the end.

Who remembers where Jesus was born?

Yes in a stable, placed in a manger, the food bin for the animals. The setting couldn't have been more humble – and the birth of the King of all kings was witnessed by the animals.

Then after 33 years of life Jesus came into Jerusalem purposely – knowing it was downright dangerous and He came in riding on a ? *can we all say it?* **Donkey**. This little working animal had the privilege of carrying the One who would save the world - on its back.

I've written a pretend story about what it might have been like for that donkey.

Hullo my name is Ota, I'm the small donkey that Jesus picked to ride on one day in Jerusalem. Well His friends came to pick me up – it was most interesting as no one had ever sat on my back before and this man Jesus rode on me and we walked into the city of Jerusalem. What a day that was! People waved palm branches and lined the path with their cloaks for my feet to step on. I felt so important. And I have to say carrying this man Jesus that one time changed my life forever. Donkeys are the lowest animal in my country. We are just used and abused as workhorses. If we stay strong we are wanted but if we get weak well its not so good.

I looked into Jesus' eyes as he approached me. They looked sad for some reason. He seemed to know that he was going to suffer and yet there was a knowing that joy would come out of this too. His eyes couldn't contain the love,

pure love that flowed from Him. I had never seen anything like it before. Then when Jesus climbed on my back I felt a tingle.

And as we moved off I felt a peace, a sense of hope and of wonder.

I was taken home after that joyous ride and tied up near the main road and forgotten. But I loved listening and watching all the comings and goings at such a busy Passover time.

Not many days later I saw Jesus again. He was barely able to walk and was carrying a large wooden beam on His back. Many people were being cruel to Him. I couldn't see very well as there was a huge crowd. I couldn't understand it why He was being punished. You only had to see His eyes to know He was innocent. He was gentle and kind. He loved helping people get free from sickness and suffering. I had had a thorn in my rump that I couldn't get to. You know how mean the thorn bushes are around here and this special man saw me flickering, trying to shake it off but it was embedded in my hide and just beginning to get infected. and before He climbed on me, He ran His hand over my hind quarters and gently pulled it out. I don't think anyone else noticed, but I did! He was naturally a kind man. When I next saw Him He had those same thorns circling His head, with blood running down. Why would anyone put thorns, big mean ones, on a man like a 'hat'? And He was carrying a heavy piece of wood on His back. I wanted to run and say *"put it on me – I can carry that for you – It's too heavy for you"*.

Yet He stayed focused – it was like He knew He had a job to do – but I could see that it would kill Him.

The sky turned black. What a dark day and I knew they had killed Him.

I saw people coming back. Most of them looked stunned, in shock.

Then on the third day I heard His followers come running by saying He was alive again, that He had risen from the dead. I was so happy.

I knew there was something special about Him. we animals are good at sensing the supernatural. There was something heavenly about Him as well as earthly.

And I had carried Him. !!! When He had sat on my back I felt loved and special. It was good to be close to Him.

I was so glad He was back and I knew that somehow His rising from the dead meant He could be close to anyone from now on, even me, the little donkey.

He is good to be close to.

What do you think?

I attempted this story to help us see that being close to Jesus is life changing for He brings Hope, Life, Love, Joy, Peace, Goodness and many other things to us. And like that donkey we can all carry Him and find that we see and experience life in a new way.

Carrying Jesus with us everywhere gives us comfort when we are grieving.

Gives us peace when we are anxious.

Gives us belonging when we don't know where we fit.

Gives us love when we feel unloved.

Carrying Jesus means being certain of Eternal Life.

The Bible verse John 3:16 gives us the assurance of that: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

And 1 John 4:15-16 *"If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him [or her] and he/she in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us."*

How do we carry Jesus?

Simply believe in Him and ask Him to share your life.

I'm going to pray a prayer and I invite those who wish to, to pray it silently with me. I have also had it printed in the service booklet, called *The Believer's Prayer* – so you can also take it home and pray it when you feel ready.

If you do pray the prayer or you are thinking about it, I encourage you to talk to another Christian and tell them.