UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS P.C. –PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2019

SERMON TOPIC: “TRIUMPH THROUGH HUMILITY”

It occurred to me that there must be something important about the donkey on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Why didn’t He go by boat as He so often did with His disciples? Why didn’t He walk, or go by chariot and horses? WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THIS TRANSPORTATION BY DONKEY? I wanted to find out how many times references were made of the donkey in the Bible. So, I did some research and found out that the donkey was mentioned in various ways and in different situations (surprisingly) **seventy seven times.**  THAT IS PRETTY SIGNIFICANT!

I would like to just mention a few of those references: 1:--Genesis 22—Abraham saddled his donkey to make the journey to Mt. Moriah where he was told to go and sacrifice Isaac. 2. Exodus 20 –Do not covet your neighbor’s donkey… or anything that is your neighbor’s. Exodus 13:13—The firstling of your donkey must be redeemed by a sheep or lamb. If you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. (??? WOW!) Numbers 16: 21…(-in the account of Balak sending Balaam to curse the Israelites) The donkey on which Balaam was riding, saw an angel with a drawn sword. So, the donkey refused to go further. It lay down with Balaam on its back. The assignment was an evil one and so God prevented Balaam from accomplishing it. When the donkey would not go, Balaam beat the donkey three times. Eventually, the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam to see the angel standing in the path. At some point the donkey spoke to Balaam asking him why he was whipping him. Just imagine a donkey speaking to its owner! But what was even more strange was the fact that **Balaam answered the donkey saying it was because it was making a fool out of him. (Here is a text on which to build a comedy play.)** The angel finally revealed himself to Balaam and told Balaam he was lucky he didn’t kill him for whipping the animal. To Balaam’s credit, he did apologize and repent for his actions. WHAT WOULD YOU DO, IF YOU WERE BALAAM IN SUCH A SITUATION where the donkey you were riding began to talk to you? Call it: **“A Conversation With a Donkey.”** It sounds like a great subject for a play. As I reflected on this scene, I had to laugh out loud. However, soon thoughts turned to a more serious matter regarding another very important donkey mentioned in Scripture.

Today, I would like to draw our attention to this very significant donkey in the Bible. This donkey was written of in prophecy by the Prophet Zachariah hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth. Through the Holy Spirit, Zachariah was given **the identity of the Messiah and Savior based on His mode of transportation to Jerusalem to make the greatest sacrifice ever for the Salvation of humanity.** Here is what he wrote in Zechariah 9: 9*—****“Rejoice fair Zion; Raise a shout fair Jerusalem! For Lo your King is coming to you. He is victorious, and triumphant! Yet humble, riding on an ass, on a donkey, foaled by a she ass. He shall banish chariots and horses…(the usual means of warfare) He shall call on the nations to surrender, and His rule shall be universal—from sea to sea and from nations to nations.”*** This text, along with Isaiah 53 are two of the strongest prophecies that authenticate the reality of the true Messiah of God from heaven*.*  ***In Isaiah 53 we are told that the Messiah would bear our sicknesses and infirmities on Himself; He would be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace would be upon Him and by His stripes we would be healed; …He would be marred beyond recognition, yet He would not open His mouth, but would surrender to His Father’s will for our sake.*** These texts most clearly point to this same Christ Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah –the Savior of the world.

Palm Sunday is significant to Christians because it annually reminds us of the beginning of the final leg of the journey of our Sacrificial Lamb to Jerusalem and ultimately to Mt. Calvary on Good Friday. It reminds us that this event was prophesied and written down in history long before Jesus came to earth. This is not just happen-stance. It is not just another fable. It is reality! Jesus would share His last Passover Supper with His disciples on that fateful Thursday Night when Judas betrayed Him. (ENTERS THE DONKEY!) It was from there He would need the donkey to take him to face His most severe trials and death by crucifixion. **Paul reminds us in Philippians 2: 5-11** how Jesus lowered, emptied, and humbled Himself to come to earth for our sake. And although He was considered equal with the Father, He did not consider it a shame to suffer and to be humiliated. Paul encouraged his listeners then, and us now, to have the same **mind and the strength of the humility of Christ who did not exploit his divinity, his authority, and his power to impress anyone. But He robed Himself in human flesh, took on the form of a slave and became obedient unto death on the Cross.**  He did it not for the righteous, but for sinners like us who were separated from the love and presence of our Creator. By so doing, Jesus reversed the curse of the Mosaic Law and turned around the earthly order of ascent to victory. He showed us how -HE STOOPED TO CONQUER. Even in Psalm 118: 22, David wrote: “**The Stone that the builders refused has become the Chief Cornerstone. This was God’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.**

In closing, we hear from Luke 19, about the TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF CHRIST JESUS INTO JERUSALEM RIDING ON A DONKEY’S BACK. THIS WAS THE FULFILLMENT OF WHAT ZACHARIAH WROTE HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE! We are told how Jesus sent two of his disciples to go into the village of Bethany of Bethpage, to find a donkey’s colt tethered. They were to lose it and bring it to Him. If anyone asked why they were losing the colt, **they should say this: “The Lord has need of it.”** It happened just as He said. THIS FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY WAS FURTHER PROOF THAT THIS JESUS WAS THE TRUE SON OF GOD, THE KING OF ISRAEL, AND SAVIOR OF THE WORLD. The time had come for Him to be fully revealed.

DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER GOD…MESSIAH…SAVIOR…DELIVERER…who was prefigured, prophesied of, written of in these authentic ways?

On His journey from the Mt. of Olives crowds gathered and threw their coats on the way for Him to walk over. They waved palm branches signifying victory and triumph, and the disciples placed their cloak on the back of the colt for Him to sit. THE CROWDS SHOUTED LOUD HOSANNA’S AND SAYING: “BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!” The authorities demanded that Jesus silenced the worshippers, but He told them: I**f they did not praise Him, the very stones would cry out.** **WHY?** Prophecy had to be fulfilled to every minute detail so that everyone would know for sure who He was and is. He was not just an accident or a coincidence. Within a day or two, many from this same crowd would shout: “CRUCIFY HIM, CRUCIFY HIM!  **Yet Jesus would remain resolute and steadfast in His quest for our Salvation.** THIS IS WHY BELIEVERS LOVE TO SING “THOU ART WORTHY…” He would endure the worse of the worst at human hands for your Salvation and mine in order **to give us the option and the opportunity to be restored to a right relationship with our Creator and not be captured by the Satanic forces of evil that lead to death, hell, and destruction.**

JESUS CAME TO GIVE US A CHOICE. WE CAN HUMBLY RECEIVE HIM WITH SINCERE AND LOUD HOSANNAS; -- OR WE CAN IGNORE HIM OR REJECT HIS GIFT OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE. IF YOU HAVE NEVER TAKEN THE TIME TO ACCEPT CHRIST JESUS, NOW IS THE time. Do you want to be fully committed to Him and the new life He has purchased for you to inherit freely? If so, then publicly confess your sins, ask for pardon and mercy, believe Him in your heart and declare Him with your mouth. Believe and declare that He came from heaven to earth, He died to redeem you, to cleanse you of your sins, to change your way of life, to give you Salvation unto eternal and abundant life and to restore you to a right relationship with your Heavenly Father. Then study Him and learn to follow His path in the strength of humility forever. Obey His instructions to show your faith in baptism and become His disciple.

ON THIS PALM SUNDAY, MAY JEHOVAH OUR GOD REFRESH US, FILL US WITH GRATITUDE AND JOY, GRANT US THE MIND OF CHRIST THAT WE MAY OVERCOME AND BE VICTORIOUS OVER ALL THE VISCITITUDES OF LIFE IN THIS WORLD. THROUGH THE STRENGTH AND TRIUMPH OF HUMILITY HE CAN AND WILL HELP US TO OVERPOWER OUR ENEMIES AND FOES WITHIN AND WITHOUT. THIS IS MY PRAYER FOR MYSELF AND FOR ALL OF US TODAY. JESUS HAS GIVEN US NEW WEAPONS WHICH ARE NOT CHARIOTS AND HORSES, SWORDS, NOR SPEARS. He came in humility and with strength to change the order of things and to atone for our sins by the power of His own Blood. He came to show us the way of the Cross, and the power of His very own name. He came to give us life and that more abundantly. HE IS OUR MODEL OF THE STRENGTH OF VICTORY THROUGH HUMILITY. HE IS OUR KING WHO RODE INTO JERUSALEM ON A DONKEY’S BACK WHO WAS FORESEEN HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE. **I believe the donkey on which He rode was reflective of His attribute and attitude as a humble and obedient beast of burden.** He would carry the burden of the sins of the world to the Cross. Therefore, we can believe and trust that the battles we face in this life are not ours to fight with sticks or stones. They are the Lord’s. They are won in the way Jesus won them for us. If we submit to Him as He submits to His Father, He will get us through to victory humbly riding with Him who bears our burdens. This is why He told us: ------***“Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” “Cast all your cares upon Him for he cares for you.”*** Let us trust in Him who STOOPED TO CONQUER! Through faith in Him, we have the victory over the trials and temptations of this life in this world. He is our help in time of trouble and our shelter in the time of storm. He is our refuge and our fortress, our strong tower and our deliverer, our hope, our joy, and our peace. HE HAS TRAVELED THE WAY TO TRIUMPH AND VICTORY HUMBLY RIDING ON A DONKEY’S COLT. Let us give thanks and praise for God’s steadfast love and faithfulness toward us. Give thanks to Jehovah God who saw our need and met them by offering us His Son! IF YOU UNDERSTAND THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS GREAT EVENT AND GIFT WE HAVE BEEN OFFERED, THEN TELL HIM YOU LOVE HIM AND YOU THANK HIM FOR LOWERING HIMSELF IN ORDER TO LIFT YOU/US UP. Lord Jesus, You took off Your Glory, put on humility, and rode on a donkey to redeem us and to win Salvation for all who would believe. IT IS NOT JUST A STORY. IT IS REAL. HE IS AVAILABLE TO ALL WHO WILL COME TO HIM BY FAITH AND INVITE HIM INTO OUR LIVES AND HEARTS. HIS STRENGTH AND TRIUMPH THROUGH HUMILITY CAN BE OURS IF WE ASK OF HIM.

Amen!