

Redwoods Presbyterian Church  
Larkspur, California  
April 1, 2012

Palm/Passion Sunday  
Palms: Cornel Barnett  
Passion: Faith McClellan

#### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Prepare our hearts, O God, to accept your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own, so that we may hear your Word and live it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The gospel lesson for the Palm section of the service is Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'"

They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it.

Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

-----  
Katrina Douglas on the site [spirituality.gather.com](http://spirituality.gather.com) tells a Palm Sunday story and adds a famous poem about a donkey.

When I was a kid, she writes, I used to go to Catholic church. My parents were lousy Catholics, but I went to a private Catholic school. My parents sent me to church, but they stayed home. I used to take my money meant for the church offering, go buy a bag of candy, and wait at a friend's house.

But one Palm Sunday, I knew I'd been caught. I saw people returning from church with their palms. I panicked. I knew my parents would know I didn't go to church because I had no palms. So I ran to the church and told the men I didn't get any. They knew I lied, but they had a whole boxful left over, so they gave me the entire box.

I was so proud. I got more palms for Palm Sunday than anyone else.

Douglas follows up with the poem "The Donkey" by G. K. Chesterton.

When fishes flew and forests walked  
 And figs grew upon thorn,  
 Some moment when the moon was blood  
 Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry  
 And ears like errant wings,  
 The devil's walking parody  
 On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,  
 Of ancient crooked will;  
 Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,  
 I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;  
 One far fierce hour and sweet:  
 There was a shout about my ears,  
 And palms before my feet.

After reading this story and poem I wondered why Douglas told them together. The only connection I could make was that they convey a surprising humility and simplicity like the gospel story today: a donkey, Jesus riding on the donkey, palms (leafy branches) strewn on the path and people praising God and hailing him as their king.

Yes, Jesus was perceived as a king in the line of David who would establish God's realm on earth but his realm would be established in an entirely different way from what the people expected.

We will continue to be surprised throughout this week and beyond. Jesus will continue in humility and simplicity.

We will next meet him and his disciples at a Passover meal which we call the Last Supper and then in the garden of prayer and dark night of betrayal. He will be arrested, scorned, beaten, crowned with thorns (an ironic touch), tried and condemned to death on a cross.

He will suffer. That's the Passion. It's simply awful. Faith will give us a glimpse of that gruesome day.