

Rev. & Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

3/28/10 **"Jesus Rode on a Donkey" Mark 11: 1-11**

Jerusalem was teeming with pilgrims from all over the country to commemorate the most significant event in Jewish history: the exodus from the land of Egypt.

The people were keyed up with expectations for the Messiah.

Jesus entered the city riding on a donkey. That was a strange scene. For the Messiah was supposed to come on a horse decorated with shiny pieces of golden ornament.

Obviously Jesus wanted to show that he had come not to reign, but to love, not to condemn, but to help, not in the might of arms, but in the strength of love.

But that was not what the crowd wanted. They wanted power rather than love, worldly splendor rather than forgiveness.

That is why in a matter of a few days the same crowd would be shouting, "Crucify him. Crucify him."

Today we should be reminded that the crowd is symbolic of each one of us.

When we say our country right or wrong, we are shouting, "Crucify him. Crucify him."

When we discriminate against people on the basis of ethnicity and the color of their skin, we are shouting, "Crucify him. Crucify him."

When we refuse to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us, we are shouting, "Crucify him. Crucify him."

Unless we admit that we are the crowd, we will not be able to meet Jesus in a meaningful way.

Lent is a time for us to recognize who we are and repent.

Not only that, Lent is a time for us to remember that for Jesus, there is no sin that is unforgivable, if we repent. His love smothers our sin.

Many years ago, I attended the funeral of my friend's mother. My friend was Christian. And the funeral was held in his church.

At the end of the service, he told the congregation about his mother. He said that one memory especially stood out.

His mother operated a small grocery shop. She could barely make ends meet. One day when my friend was a small child, he stole some coins out of the moneybox placed in the corner of the shop.

When his mother found out about it, she was upset and told him in no uncertain terms that stealing was a crime and completely unacceptable.

Embarrassed and angry, my friend shouted at his mother at the top of his voice. "Look, other kids have money. But I don't, because we are so poor. Ma, I am ashamed of us."

Tears suddenly welled up in his mother's eyes. She ran toward him and held him so tightly that he could hardly breathe.

My friend ended his speech by saying that his mother's tears and her powerful embrace reminded him of Jesus.

God loves us. Jesus Christ makes that absolutely clear. He never gives up on us, even us who shout at times, "Crucify him!"

Thanks be to God.