

PARADOX:

Finding Clarity in Life's Contradictions

Our lives are filled with apparent contradictions. We often say illogical things like, "Less is more," and "The only constant is change." Literally speaking, such statements can't be true, but deep down, we know they are right. And so it is with God sometimes.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah found God in life's paradoxes. He saw God as a garden flourishing in the desert, as a slave who is more powerful than his masters, and as a healer who is mortally wounded. Through his prophecies, Isaiah revealed a deeper reality about God that cuts through our apparent contradictions and points directly to our crucified savior, Jesus Christ. At The Story, we'll explore these deeper truths beginning Sunday, March 2, through Easter Sunday.

April 13, 2025 - Part 7 - Blessed Donkeys with Beautiful Feet

Happy Palm Sunday! For thousands of years, Christians have gathered on the Sunday before Easter to celebrate Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem on April 6 of (about) AD 30. The story is found in all four gospels. Here is a summary from Luke 19:28-40 and Matthew 21:8-9.

[Jesus] went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" And they said, "The Lord needs it." And they brought it to Jesus, and...a very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

*Why would Jesus choose to ride a donkey (of all creatures) into the city? They're not the most pleasant animals. **What traits/characteristics come to mind when you think of donkeys?***

Did you learn anything new or surprising about donkeys in the first part of today's message *(besides the fact that Pastor Eric is obsessed with donkeys)?*

As we continue our journey through Isaiah, let's examine a passage in which God describes something that's typically ugly and unpleasant as "beautiful" and "pure":

Isaiah 52:3-12 - For this is what the Lord says: "You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed...And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed. Therefore my people will know my name; therefore on that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I."

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the Lord's house. But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

What was going on in and around Jerusalem when Isaiah wrote these words? Why did the people of God desperately need to hear some "good news"?

Why is it so unexpected and shocking for God to say “How beautiful... are the feet...” - especially considering the conditions in which people lived long ago? Why would “beautiful feet” be a paradoxical image?

At one point during the Last Supper, Jesus broke with tradition in a shocking way:

John 13:1, 4-8, 12-14 - It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end...So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

Why was Simon Peter so appalled by the idea of Jesus washing his feet?

By riding the donkey into the city and later washing his disciples’ feet, what bigger message was Jesus sending?

In what ways can you relate to a donkey - a stubborn, unclean, hard-working “beast of burden” with an attitude and a twisted sense of humor? What does God see in you when you choose to follow Jesus?

Your Notes:



Good Friday Worship

Join us this Friday at 7pm as we reflect on Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and remember the suffering he faced before and during his crucifixion. Arrive early (open at 6:15pm) to walk through the Stations of the Cross. Nursery care available for ages 6 months - 10 years.



Annual Easter Egg Hunt

Join us on Saturday from 10am-1pm for an EGG-citing time of fun for the family! We’ll have activities, crafts, and games for kids of all ages - including egg hunts! Make sure to grab your FREE tickets here: thestory.church/easter



Easter Sunday Schedule

We can’t wait to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the hope it means for all of us next Sunday!

7am - Sunrise Worship in the Courtyard

8:30, 9:45 & 11:05am - Worship in the Sanctuary

Pre-register for nursery care: thestory.church/easter