Donkey

This month we are thinking in assembly about different animals from the Bible.

Two weeks ago we heard the story of Noah and the way he trusted God and God saved him and all the animals in the ark. Last week we heard a very old story about a man called Jonah who ignored God and then listened to God after he met up with a big fish.

Today we are talking about an animal which was very common in the land where Jesus lived and features in quite a few stories about him. This is a donkey. Have any of you seen a donkey or even visited the donkey sanctuary?

Donkeys in those days were highly respected. They carried heavy loads and were also used for ploughing and threshing. At the time of Jesus horses were used in war so kings rode donkeys in peace time.

We have three stories about donkeys from the Bible today. One is a really old funny story from the Old Testament. Two of the stories are connected with Jesus.

Here is the first funny story:

Balaam and His Donkey

God had told a man called Balaam not to go off and meet with a group of leaders from a different country.. But Balaam disobeyed God. He got up the next morning, saddled his donkey and went anyway. God was cross with Balaam so he sent an angel to stand in the road and stop Balaam. The donkey saw the angel with a sword in its hand. So what do you think the donkey did? She left the road and went into the field.

Balaam couldn’t see the angel so he got angry with his donkey and even hit her to get her to go back on the road and on they went. Later the angel stood on a narrow path between two vineyards. Again the angel scared the donkey and the donkey walked really close against the wall crushing Balaam’s foot against the wall. Balaam hit his poor donkey again.

God’s angel went ahead again and this time stood at a narrow place. It was too narrow for the donkey to turn left or right. The donkey saw the angel and lay down under her rider Balaam. Balaam was very angry indeed now and hit her again.

Then God made the donkey able to speak. The donkey said ‘What have I done to make you hit me three times?’

Balaam said ‘You have made me look very foolish. If I had a sword I would kill you right now’

The donkey said ‘I am your donkey. You have ridden me for years. Have I ever done this to you before?’

‘No’ answered Balaam.

Then God let Balaam see the angel just as the donkey could. Balaam bowed down.

The angel said to Balaam ‘ Why have you hit your donkey three times? I have stood here to stop you. What you are doing is wrong. The donkey saw me and she turned away three times. If she had not turned away you would be dead by now.’

Balaam said he was sorry to God and promised to do what he should do. The Bible doesn’t tell us whether his donkey ever spoke again.

That story is one of the most unusual stories from the Bible which has been told for centuries. It is another example of the many stories told in the Bible of the importance of listening to God and obeying him.

Other stories about donkeys are from the life of Jesus. Tradition tells us that Joseph and Mary rode a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Another story is that Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday only a few days before he died. Riding a donkey was the sign for the crowds that Jesus was coming in peace not war.

Do you know that donkeys have a cross on their backs? Legend says that the donkey that carried Jesus to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday also saw Jesus die on Good Friday and that the shadow of the cross fell on his back as he turned away. That is just a legend and not in the Bible but it reminds us that animals can teach us humans to be peaceful and loving and caring just like Jesus taught.

Thanking God for Creation

We thank you God for the wonderful things you created:

for the animals, big and small,

for the oceans, deep and blue,

for the land, green and fertile,

for the sky and all the birds of the air,

for the sun that shines and cheers us up.

for the people that God made,

Help us look after this wonderful earth. Amen.

A prayer about Climate change

Dear Lord, the wonderful world you have given us is a great gift and we are truly blessed with all that we have from the Earth’s resources.

We are worried about Climate Change and the impact this has on our environment. Help us to realise how delicate our planet is and to understand how easily it can be harmed through global warming. You have trusted us to look after your creation for future generations. Guide our actions so that they are always thoughtful and mindful of our planet and all that exists on it. We ask this in your name. Amen.

A prayer for our school

Dear God, thank you for all the opportunities we have in our school.

Thank you for our teachers, our helpers and all the equipment we have.

Thank you that we can ask questions.

Thank you that it is ok for us to express our opinions.

Thank you that we are listened to.

Thank you that we can get help when we struggle.

We pray for children who do not get an education,

who are not listened to,

who do not have the opportunities we do the things we do,

and who do not get help when they struggle.

Let us use our education to make life better for others.

Let us always care about those with less than we have

and to help where we can. Amen.