May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

It is a very strange Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus rides into Jerusalem. He enters the temple. He looks around at everything. And he leaves. He does nothing. He says nothing. He just leaves. He goes to Bethany. What’s that all about?

In Matthew (21:10-13) the whole city is in turmoil when Jesus enters. He goes to the temple and drives out those who are buying and selling. He overturns tables and chairs. In Luke (19:40-46) Jesus weeps over Jerusalem and then enters the temple where he drives out those who were buying and selling. And in John’s account (12:12-33) Jesus does not even go to the temple. He cleansed it at the beginning of the Gospel. Instead, he enters the city and begins teaching.

Mark’s is the only gospel that says Jesus entered the temple, looked around, and left. So why did Jesus leave the temple and go to Bethany? The gospel tells us why. Jesus left the temple “*as it was already late*” (Mark 11:11). So that got me to wondering. What if this is about something more than just the time of day? What if Jesus is late getting somewhere or doing something?

What might Jesus be late for? I think Jesus was late getting the colt back to its owner. Only Mark speaks about Jesus returning the colt. Jesus sent two disciples to borrow this colt and told them if anyone asked why they were taking the colt they were to say, “*The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately*” (Mark 11:3). And that’s what they did.

So what if that’s why Jesus left the temple? Maybe he left so he could keep his promise and follow through on what he said he would do. Maybe this is about Jesus being true to himself and keeping his word. What if returning the colt is a metaphor for us as we enter into and walk though this Holy Week?

What might returning the colt mean for us throughout this week?

So my first question is: what do you need to return this week? What do you need to release or let go of? We all have stuff that we’ve carried around with us for far too long. It’s no longer able to take us anywhere or give us life. It’s just baggage we carry that continues to weigh us down. It impoverishes life.

What do you need to let go of, release, and return this week? Is it a grudge or resentment? Anger? Fear? Disappointment and regret? Guilt? Envy? I don’t know what it is for you but I am convinced that we all have our stuff. Maybe Holy Week is the time to return and release it all to God, trusting that God can do something with this stuff when we were never able to.

And what if returning and releasing this stuff is also about returning to our original self, that self of beauty and goodness, that God created in and has loved from the beginning?

What if those are the two movements throughout this week? Returning, releasing, and letting go. And returning to and reclaiming those parts of ourselves that have been lost, ignored, forgotten, or denied. Even as we carry around that stuff that needs to be returned, so also there are parts of ourselves and our life to which we need to return.

Here is my second question. What do you need to return to? What if we returned to joy, hope, beauty, truth and honesty? What if we came back to justice, mercy, forgiveness? What if we reclaimed the dignity and holiness of each human life? What if we recenter ourselves in peace and courage? What if we returned to love of neighbor, self, and enemy? Coming back to ourselves would be like a new life, wouldn’t it?

So we begin this week by returning the colt. What do you need to return and to what do you need to return? Those are the two questions. To answer them we must look around at everything. That’s what Jesus did. It’s not so much just looking around at everything outside us but looking around at everything within us. Look at what’s there. Look at what’s missing. Look at what you need, what you feel, who you truly are, and who you want to be.

Take that image of returning the colt with you this week. Take it wherever you go. Bring it to whatever you do. Let it be present as you live your life and as you engage people in relationships whether in your family, at work or at the grocery store.

Returning the colt is how Holy Week begins. Returning to God and ourselves is the promise of how this week will end. Look around at everything and then go return the colt. Amen.