

On one of the first occasions that my American wife, Laura, and I were walking around London, she suddenly pointed to a very small car. It was one of the old-fashioned Minis that you might remember, and she said, "Look, there's a clown car."

I said, "What's that?"

She said, "A clown car."

She's only seen them before in circuses, never on the road. She had to describe to me that when she'd seen it before, this car, the little Mini would drive into the circus ring and half a dozen large clowns would get out. It was the beginning of their act. It was a funny and absurd way to begin their act to get around, six grown men squeezed into a tiny car. It's also ridiculous that the one who was king, God's own son, the chosen one, should travel into Jerusalem on a donkey. Any normal king would ride in a chariot or on some grand white stallion, but Jesus is not a normal kind of king. His is an upside down kingdom, a kingdom in which the first should be last and the last should be first.

Jesus is a king, who St. Paul says took the form of a servant. He didn't lord it over people. He humbled himself and became obedient, obedient even unto death on a cross. As Bonhoeffer said, a king who dies on a cross must be a king of a very strange kingdom. The ridiculous way that Jesus enters into Jerusalem points to the absurdity of what was to happen afterwards. The God who created the world, who took on human form in the person of Jesus Christ is, as we are about to hear, about to walk the way of the cross. This passion story, which we're about to read together, is a story which reveals the extent of God's love for his people, the lengths to which he was prepared to go to win them back. It's a ridiculous love story.