The Donkey who missed Easter

Honey and Harry were brother and sister and the very best of friends. They had grown up together picking fruit off the trees, finding the most delicious clumps of grass to eat, splashing in the streams and chasing each other through the sandy roads. They were two of the happiest donkeys you could ever hope to meet.

One morning, as they were tied up by a dusty market stall in Jerusalem, they were playing eye-spy with their Mum, Olive. Honey said 'Eye-spy, with my little eye, something beginning with….d.' 'Um, donkey?' said Harry? 'No, not donkey.' 'Drink? Dirt? DRAGON?!' 'No!' laughed Honey, 'Disciple!' 'Oh' said Harry, 'There's two disciples, and they're coming this way! I wonder if anything exciting is going to happen?'

The two disciples came towards Olive, Honey and Harry, and began to untie Honey. 'Bye Mum, bye Harry!' she said. 'I just know that something wonderful is going to happen, I can't wait to tell you all about it when I get back.'

Harry watched as Honey and the disciples walked away. He wasn't sure how to feel, he felt all mixed up inside and not really sure what he should do with himself. He was pleased for Honey, but he was going to miss her for the rest of the day. He stood with his hoof in the sandy path, kicking it gently and watching the dust fly around and settle down.

All of a sudden, Harry started to realise that all around him people were moving, they were getting louder and noisier and shouting 'Hosanna!' 'Come along Mum'

said Harry, 'let's go and see what's happening!' Harry was just getting ready to run when his Mum said 'Come along Harry, we're needed back at home, our friends are poorly, and they need our help to carry the water and the grain back inside. I'm sorry, my love, next time.'

'But I want to stay!' said Harry, 'I want to see what's going on!' He didn't want to miss out, and he wanted to be able to tell Honey everything when she got back later that day. Olive looked at her young colt and said, 'I know Harry, I know. It can be really hard to miss out, but we have people at home who need us.'

Harry trotted home backwards, trying to see and hear as much as he possibly could. It wasn't that he didn't want to help carry the water, he actually didn't mind that because the water always splashed out of the jars and tickled his back, it was just that he really hadn't wanted to miss out, it didn't seem fair.

Later that evening, Honey came bursting through the stable doors. 'You'll never guess who I carried today!' she squealed with glee, 'Jesus! And he really is as wonderful as the sheep told us he was. Everyone was shouting 'Hosanna' and waving branches as he rode me into the city, it was so loud and exciting I thought I was going to trip over! But I didn't, and then people started putting their coats on the path for us to walk on…I've never felt so special, ever! It really has been the best day.' And with that, Honey lay down and curled up in a pile of straw and started to snore.

Harry sat down, even sadder than before now. He was pleased for Honey, carrying Jesus really must have been an honour, he just wished that he'd have been able to stay and see him.

The next few days, Olive, Honey and Harry were rushed off their feet, fetching water and food for their friends, making sure the sheep had some fresh grass to eat, the chickens had enough grain and that everyone was tucked up safely at night. Honey was enjoying telling her story again and again of how she'd carried Jesus, until their friends Simon and Sally came to see them. They said they had some sad news to tell, and that, yesterday, Jesus had died on the cross. All of the animals came and lay down, tears running down their faces and their hearts felt heavy in a way they never had before. The sun set, and darkness covered the animals, who didn't even feel like looking up to see the stars that night, even though that normally cheered them up.

In the morning, their friends were starting to feel better, and put jars of water and sacks of grain on Harry and Honey's backs, asking them to please walk over to their neighbours and check if they had enough to eat and drink. The two donkeys went on their way, trundling slowly down the path. As they came to house, they met some mice who were squeaking happily 'He's alive! He's alive!' Harry and Honey watched them jumping through the sand and into the hills and looked at each other in astonishment.

When they reached their friends house, they found some lambs skipping happily. 'Haven't you heard?' bleated the little lambs, 'Jesus is alive! We went to his tomb this morning, but it was empty, he wasn't there! And then we saw him, walking and talking to his friends Mary and Mary. It's a miracle!' Honey and Harry stared at the lambs in amazement. Honey started to jump as well, laughing with happiness. 'I can't wait to tell Mum!' she said 'and Sally and ….' Honey caught sight of Harry's face, he wasn't as happy as she was, in fact, now he looked more miserable that ever! 'Harry, didn't you hear?' she asked, 'why aren't you happy?'

Harry didn't know how to explain it to his sister. Of course he was pleased, in fact, he couldn't think of anything better he could have heard this day, but this was another thing that he'd missed. He wanted to help look after his friends, and he wanted to help carry the water and the grain for their neighbours, but he also really, really wanted to see Jesus. Harry looked up at Honey, and then looked down at the ground.

Honey came to sit next to him. She said gently 'Harry, do you wish you could have been there, with Jesus?' Harry nodded slowly, big, full tears rolling down his nose. Honey gave her brother a hug. 'We can't always do everything we want to do.' she explained, gently, 'but, you couldn't help missing out, and you were helping other people. That's what's truly important. I remember Mum telling us that all Jesus wants is for us to love God, and to love our neighbours, and to love ourselves. And I love you so much.'

'So do we' said the neighbours, 'thank you for looking after us, we needed the water and the food after feeling poorly, you've really helped us you know.' Harry looked up and through his tears he thought he could see Jesus stood next to Honey, nodding. He blinked the tears away and gave Honey a massive hug as his mouth started to break into one great big massive smile. Looking after the people he loved might have meant he missed out on being there for that very first Easter morning, but he could never miss out on being with Jesus, no matter where he was.