

Fil-Am Community Church

Pastor David Bennett

Key Verse: Luke 19:28-38

“What the Master Needs”

Christian author Philip Yancey, in his book *The Jesus I Never Knew*, described Palm Sunday this way: “The triumphal entry has about it an aura of ambivalence, and as I read all the accounts together, what stands out to me now is the slapstick nature of the affair. I imagine a Roman officer galloping up to check on the disturbance. He has attended processions in Rome, where they do it right. The conquering general sits in a chariot of gold, with stallions straining at the reins and wheel spikes flashing in the sunlight. Behind him officers in polished armor display banners captured from vanquished armies. At the rear comes a ragtag procession of slaves and prisoners in chains, living proof of what happens to those who defy Rome.

“In Jesus’ triumphal entry, the adoring crowd makes up the ragtag procession: the lame, the blind, the children, the peasants from Galilee and Bethany. When the officer looks for the object of their attention he spies a forlorn figure, weeping, riding on no stallion or chariot but on the back of a baby donkey, a borrowed coat draped across its backbone serving as his saddle.”

The story of our Lord’s entry into Jerusalem is a familiar one for most church people. They have heard this story Year after year. But the great thing about God’s Word is that even the most familiar story is fresh if we listen carefully and sometimes even in familiar accounts you see things you hadn’t seen before. There are a lot of great lessons in the story of the Triumphal Entry. Today I want to focus on a part of the story that perhaps you have never really thought about. I want to draw your attention to a so-called,

insignificant, unnamed person in this story: the man who owned the donkey.
READ Luke 19:28-38.

Let's look at this passage. Our text talks about "owners" of the donkey. Perhaps one person owned the donkey and one owned the foal of the donkey. Perhaps there were two family members who were owners of the donkey by virtue of their family. Truth is, I don't know. But I am going to look at this as if there was one primary owner.

Now, a good question to start with is, why the owners loan out their donkeys? There are a few possible reasons: 1) This was typical Eastern Hospitality. Especially at Passover, the locals knew that they needed to lend what they could to their visiting countryman. Therefore loaning the donkey was a common courtesy.

2) Some suggest that this would have been an honor to let a distinguished rabbi ride your beast. In other words, they allowed them to take the donkey as a matter of pride. 3) Some others suggest that perhaps Jesus had arranged for the use of the donkey much earlier and he set up a password of "the master needs him". In other words they gave him the donkey as part of a business deal.

4) But I suggest another possibility. I think this man loaned his donkey to Jesus because He saw Him as THE Master. "Why are you untying the donkeys?" Once it was stated that "The Master needs it", the discussion was over. I think if they gave the donkey for one of the other reasons there would have been some additional questions: how long do you need my donkey? how far will you travel? will you make sure he is cared for? will you bring him back when you are finished? will you sign this "rental agreement?"

I think the owner of the donkey had faith. I also think he had come to three conclusions, that apply to how God reacts to all believers.

1) The true believer is willing to give what He has to the Lord.

I don't know how many donkeys this man had. Whether he had one or a hundred it doesn't matter. Donkeys were valuable.

They were a burden-bearing animal, which meant they could transport things. They were doing what trucks do today. They were able to help care for the land. They were doing what tractors do today. They were a means of transportation. They filled the need that cars fill today.

This matters because I want you to see that this is no "little" gift. But this is what the Master needed, so this is what the Master got. God does not always ask for big things. God will not ask us to give what we don't have. We may not feel we have anything significant to give, but God sometimes takes simple things and uses them in great ways.

Moses was asked to give his walking stick. Rahab gave a corner of her roof to hide the spies. David gave his sling shot. The widow at Zarephath gave the last of her oil and flour to make a meal for Elijah. The Shunammite woman gave a room of her home to Elisha. The widow that Jesus praised gave her two cents. The young boy gave his five loaves and two fish. The early church shared their possessions with those who had a need. The Bible is full of people who gave what they had, to be used by the Lord.

Following on in the donkey owner's example,

2) The true believer knows that what we have belongs to the Lord.

Everything we have has been given to us as a gift from the Lord. Everything: our time, our talents, our resources, they have been entrusted to us so that we might use them for Him. Stewardship is not just about giving money; it is about managing what He has given well.

I wonder what God thinks when He sees us wasting what He has given us?

Or worse, when He sees us squandering the good gifts He has entrusted to us? Listen to Max Lucado's thoughts: "Sometimes I get the impression that God wants me to give him something and sometimes I don't give it because I don't know for sure, and then I feel bad because I've missed my chance. Other times I know he wants something but I don't give it because I'm too selfish. And other times, too few times, I hear him and I obey him and feel honored that a gift of mine would be used to carry Jesus to another place. And still other times I wonder if my little deeds today will make a difference in the long haul."

Maybe you have those questions, too. Each of us has a donkey. You and I each have something in our lives, which, if given back to God, could, like the donkey, move Jesus and his story further down the road. Maybe you can sing or hug or program a computer or speak French or write a check. Whichever, that's your donkey. Whichever, your donkey belongs to him.

It really does belong to him. Your gifts are his and the donkey was his. The original wording of the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples is proof: "If anyone asks you why you are taking the donkeys, you are to say, 'Its Lord is in need.'" [Max Lucado, *And the Angels were Silent* p. 54] You see? It's not about donkeys; it's about attitude.

God has given us many things: our talents, our resources, our time, our children, our jobs, our interests. They belong to Him. God has given them to us as a gift. They are ours to use, but He can ask for them back at any time. At any time He can request that what He has given be returned in some fashion. He can do this because He is the true owner; we are trustees.

And finally,

3) The true believer knows that the value of what we have is multiplied when it is placed in the Lord's hands.

The man gave his donkey, even though it was valuable to him. But look at how much more valuable it became when placed in the hands of Jesus. His donkey was had a part in fulfilling prophecy. His donkey transported the Lord of All Creation. His donkey (and it's owner) have been remembered for two thousand years because of their simple act. None of this would have been possible if the man had refused to give what He had. If we talked to the man he might very well have said, "Hey, it was no big deal." But it was. What we place in the Lord's hands is used in remarkable ways.

The person who gives their time to read to or visit with people in a nursing home may feel like they are doing little, but they will be surprised when they get to Heaven. The Sunday School teacher who labors week after week faithfully giving of themselves to their students while no one notices will be surprised at how God has used their service to mold the next generation of believers. The person who gets alone with God and fervently prays for the saints may feel like their prayers accomplish nothing, but they don't see how God is changing hearts and circumstances in response to those prayers. The person who faithfully puts their check in the plate week after week may feel that their tithe is insignificant. But they don't see that God is using their faithfulness to make it possible not only to have good facilities in which to teach and worship, but God is using those funds to reach people in our community and literally around the world.

The person who takes the time to jot a note, to make a call, to stop by and visit may feel that they don't have much to offer, but by giving what they have God may be using their efforts to encourage someone who is weary, to comfort someone who thought they were alone, or to reach someone who was drifting away.

What we have is never more valuable than when we place these things in the capable and strong hands of Jesus. So, here's the question? What is God asking of you? How can you "invest" what He has given you? What does He want you to give? A talent, some time, some money, a willingness to obey? I

can't tell you. It may be simple, it may be great . . . but what we do know is that the true disciple gives what the Master asks for.

There were 2 groups of people that Sunday. There were the Enthusiastic. These people screamed 'Hosanna" on Sunday and at the end of the week, said nothing, or even, "Crucify Him". These are the people who follow the crowd. They will sing the hymns, clap their hands, serve on boards and committees but never make a commitment to Jesus. They are going to go whichever way is popular, whichever way is the most fun or which "ministers to them most". Their chief concern is not following Christ; it is being "where the action is."

And then there were the Committed. These are the folks who trust Christ as Savior and as Lord. He is the Master of their lives. What He commands they will do. Where He sends, they will go. What He asks for, they will give.

So, which group are you in? You see, the issue this Palm Sunday is the same as the first Palm Sunday. Jesus declares Himself to be the long awaited King that will redeem those who trust Him. The declaration is the same . . . and so is the choice. Will you receive Him as King and Savior or will you simply stand on the sidelines? You see, it is really not about a man's donkey . . . it is about a person's heart.