

Lessons from Unsung Heroes  
Luke 19:28-40

Good morning! Happy Palm Sunday! Welcome to Fil-Am Community Church. We've been going through a series we're calling "Heroes 2" and we're looking at some unknown heroes in the Bible who are not in the mold of Moses, David, Samson, and all those big names in the Bible. So, first we looked at Doubting Thomas, then we looked at Courageous Abigail, and then we looked at Zealous King Jehu. So, today, being Palm Sunday, who are we going to look at? Can you guess? Sorry I don't have any prizes anymore and so I won't pick a winner.

But please turn to **Luke 19:28-40** in your Bibles and follow along as I read these verses. Then, as we read, you can figure out who the unsung heroes are.

READ LUKE 19:28-40

The story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is a familiar one for most church people. We 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.

Now, there are a lot of great lessons in the story of the Triumphal Entry: There is the way Jesus comes boldly and publicly into Jerusalem even though he knows he is a "marked man". There is His bold declaration that He is the Messiah. He does this by coming into Jerusalem riding on the foal of a donkey. The prophet Zechariah points to this event as a pointer to the coming Messiah. There is the demeanor of Jesus as he enters the city. He doesn't come in as a conquering ruler He comes humbly as a King of Peace. The Warrior would ride a horse, the peacemaker rides a donkey.

There is the deep evidence of the love that Jesus has for His people which we see through the tears that He cries over Jerusalem just before he entered.

These are all great lessons. But this morning 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 at least two people who are bit players in this great event. The persons I draw your attention to are people who are unnamed, unknown, unsung . . . the disciples? No, the answer is the people who owned the donkey. So, this message is entitled, **“Lessons from Unsung Heroes”**.

Note, in verse 33, our passage talks about "owners" of the donkey. The owners could be a couple, like a husband and wife. You see, during those days, a donkey was a prime property. If you owned a donkey, you pretty much belong to the middle class. It was a beast of burden and had so much value and, therefore, like a house, was conjugal property. Now, some say that it could be a property that's owned by the whole community like they pooled their resources together to acquire this donkey. We're not sure. In any case, it doesn't matter who owns the donkey. But for our purposes, I'm assuming here that the owners are a couple.

Now, we can be pretty safe in concluding that the owners lived in Bethphage or Bethany. Both these towns were "suburbs" of Jerusalem. They were very close together and I don't think either was very big. It is likely the owners knew many people who lived in the two towns. Perhaps you remember that Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. When Jesus went to Jerusalem he usually stayed with this family. I suspect when Jesus was in town, everyone knew it.

This may not seem significant to you at first. But remember your chronology. The gospel of John tells us that just recently, in this Bethany (maybe even a day or two earlier) the town was buzzing with the news that Lazarus had died, been laid in the tomb, and then brought back from the dead by Jesus.

To say the least, this would have been big news! I wonder if our donkey owners were there? Maybe they were friends of Lazarus.

Perhaps they were there the day Jesus arrived. Maybe they were one of those who stood with awe as Lazarus walked out of the tomb.

Let me tell you why this is significant. You see, there are lots of suggested reasons as to why the owners let these disciples take their donkey without so much complaint.

You know, this was typical eastern hospitality. Especially at Passover, the locals knew that they needed to lend what they could to their visitors. Therefore, loaning the donkey was a common courtesy.

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.

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.

But I suggest another possibility. I think the owners loaned their donkey to Jesus because they regard him as THE Lord and Master. They saw what Jesus did, they heard Him speak and they believed. Since they believed that He was the Lord . . . everything they had was now at the Master's disposal. For them, loaning the donkey was an act of worship and love. Let me take it a step further. They not only loaned the donkey, but they gave the donkey away to their master.

Interestingly, the word used for "owner" in the original Greek is Kurios which is literally Lord, the same title applied to Jesus by the Gospel writers. The owners were the Lords of the Donkey. But, these Lords of the Donkey bowed to the real Lord who asked for their donkey.

I think my case is strengthened by the fact that only one question was asked: "Why are you untying the donkeys?" Once they received the reply, "The Master needs it" the discussion was over.

I think if the owners gave the donkey for one of the other reasons there would have been some additional questions: How long do you need the donkey? How far will you travel? How will you make sure he is cared for? Will you bring him back when you are finished? Will you sign this "rental agreement?"

I believe the owners of the donkey were followers of Jesus. And based on their reaction to their Lord and Master's request, I think we can learn three lessons or principles. This afternoon, let me share what these are.

**1. A true follower is willing to give what he or she has to the Lord.**

I don't know how many donkeys this couple had. Whether they had one or a hundred it doesn't matter. As I mentioned earlier, 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.

I tell you this 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 gave 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 gave her two cents.

The young boy gave his five loaves and two fish. The early Christians gave their their possessions to the church. In each of these cases, these people gave what they had to be used by the Lord.

What could we give? Can we give to God whatever is valuable to us? Can we give it to the Lord as our sacrifice? Maybe our time?

Do we have time for him or for other people? Nowadays, our constant companion is our phone. But I hope we are as excited to look at God's Word on our phones as we are when looking at our messages and videos. Are we willing to be interrupted by people who are in need? How about our money? Are we investing in things that have eternal value or waste them away in lotto or buying things to impress others? Do we tithe faithfully? How about our talents? Many of us are gifted and creative and can be used by God. Are we using these talents for the Lord? Or do we keep them to ourselves?

Last week, I mentioned Oswald Chambers, the author of the devotional book "My Utmost for His Highest". Let me tell you a bit about how God called him to ministry. This is from a book called "Abandoned to God" which is his biography. Probably he was in early twenties, about to graduate from college and he had majored in the arts. He was a great painter. In fact, he earned money selling his paintings. He was well-known. He wanted to use his skill to give glory to God and so he thought he would make that his career.

Now, he had the practice of everyday, early in the morning, he would go up the hill close to his home and there, beside a tree, would do his quiet time. Until he felt like God was directing him to drop his painting career and become a preacher instead. He shrugged it off. He didn't want to become a preacher. But it seems everyday God's impression was becoming stronger. He kept ignoring it. Until one day, he felt God like was telling him that if he didn't obey, God was going to use somebody else. That's when he got convicted.

That's when he thought he couldn't go on with life with the thought that he disobeyed God. And with his obedience at last, millions of people have been blessed with the devotional which is actually a compilation of his writings through the years he was in ministry.

We must understand that as we give obediently and trustfully, God can use whatever we give for his glory.

As the saying goes, "God is not looking for your ability but he is looking for your availability". Are you ready, willing, and available for the Lord?

The next lesson is

## **2. A true follower knows that what he or she has belongs to the Lord.**

Everything we have has been given to us is 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 well what He has given.

Suppose you had an extra ten thousand dollars (and were unwilling to give it to the church). And suppose you gave that ten thousand dollars to a broker to invest on your behalf. What would you expect to happen? Obviously, you would expect a favorable return on your money. But what would happen if the money you gave was spent by the broker for his own pleasures? What if it was squandered? I would guess that you would be angry. You would take that person to court to get back what you had entrusted to him.

Have you ever wondered 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 reflection in a book he wrote, (quote) "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." (end of quote)

Maybe you have those questions, too. All of us have 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 draw or dance or program a computer or speak Spanish or write a check or simply hug.

Whichever, that's your donkey. Whichever, your donkey belongs to him. It really does belong to him. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." So, the donkey was his and your gifts are his. When the "owners" or the Lords of the donkey asked, "Why are you untying the colt?", the disciples answered, "The Lord needs it". The owners, now realizing who the real Lord of the donkey was, gave the donkey away.

You know, I don't really think the lesson is about donkeys . . . it's about attitude. Truth is, God has given us many things: our talents, our resources, our time, our children, our jobs, our interests, and the list goes on.

They all belong to Him. God has given them to us as a gift. They are ours to use . . . but He can ask them back at any time. Like the condo unit that An's family is living in now. That unit is a gift of God. And God may ask it back by perhaps, when the pandemic is over, making An decide that her unit be a place where we can hang out after the service. If you don't know yet, their unit is literally just a half mile away from POPLC. So, at any time, God can request that what He has given be returned in some fashion. He can do this because He is the true owner . . . we are but stewards.

So, the first lesson we learn is that a true follower is willing to give what he has to the Lord. The second lesson is that a true follower knows that what he or she has belongs to the Lord. The final lesson is this

**3. A true follower knows that the value of what he or she has is multiplied when it is placed in the Lord's hands.**

The man gave his donkey . . . it was valuable to him. But look at how much more valuable it became when placed in the hands of Jesus. This donkey had a part in fulfilling prophecy in **Zechariah 9:9**,

**Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!**

**Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!**

**See, your king comes to you,**

**righteous and victorious,**

**lowly and riding on a donkey,**

**on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

This donkey and its owners have been remembered for about two thousand years because of their simple act of obedience and sacrifice.

None of this would have been possible if the owners had refused to give what they had. If we talked to them, they 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.

Like 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 I suspect that 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 others 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 gives to the church financially 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 pay for 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.

The person who shares their music doesn't see how many times God brings that tune or those words to the remembrance of those who were listening.

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, something else? I can't tell you. It may be simple, it may be great . . . but what we do know is that a true follower gives what the Master asks for.

Now, let's look at the latter part of the passage and see four groups of people. We better ask ourselves. Which of the four groups of people do I belong to?

The first group are The **Opponents**. I suspect since you are here, you may not be in this group. But it is possible that you resist everything He tells you.

It is possible that you resist any notion of someone being the Lord and Master of your life. If so, then you are an opponent like the scribes, Pharisees and others who wanted to kill Jesus.

Then, we have **the Enthusiastic**. These people screamed 'Hosanna" one day and said nothing or worse, they said "Crucify Him" at the end of this same week. 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."

Finally, we have **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. These are the true followers of Jesus.

So, which group are you in? Only the last group are going to Heaven. Please be clear, they are not going to Heaven because of what they do. They are going to Heaven because they trust in what Jesus has done for them. They believe that Jesus gave his life for them on the cross, that he was buried, and on the third day he rose again. And because they trust Him they are willing to follow, to obey, to give freely. That is the evidence of genuine faith. That is the evidence that they truly love Jesus. Do you see that evidence in your life?

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 someone's donkey . . . it is about someone's heart.

What the Lord Jesus Christ wants more than anything, is your heart. He wants your trust, your allegiance, your willingness to follow Him. And that's why the owners of the donkey are a model to us. They gave what they had, without complaints, because they trusted the one who made the request. They are heroes, too.

Here is a simple assignment for you,

When you get up in the morning remind yourself that everything you have (your life, your time, your talent, your resources) are His. Make a conscious choice to invest His resources well.

When you are wondering what your meager gifts can accomplish . . . remind yourself not to merely look at what you can see . . . look for, and trust what the Lord is doing that is unseen.

Finally, place a rope, or a plastic donkey, or a Palm Branch someplace prominent. Use this as a reminder of the couple who owned the donkey. And every time you see that item remember that they believed enough to give what the Lord asked, in faith, without asking questions. And even though you don't know their names . . . be spurred on by their example.