

Matthew 21: 1-11 Palm (Passion) Sunday 2020.

Let me reflect for a moment on the VALUABLE role of the owner of those two animals mentioned in the Gospel. "The Lord needs them," were those the code words agreed upon earlier, between Jesus and the owner of the Donkey & Colt?

Now, a question for you and me: Did you know that as a Christian, *you are supposed to be a donkey-giver too?* No, you don't actually own one of those long-eared, obstinate animals. **But you have some things that the Master could use.** Some of us, this preacher excluded, can sing a song harmoniously. Some are very effective in reaching out to unchurched persons. Some of us can operate a computer or teach a class or organize a capital funds campaign or help a homeless person or repair a leaking roof or make a caring phone call. **All of us can give something that promotes Jesus and his kingdom.**

All of us have some donkeys. All of us have something which, if given to the Lord, will help him enter another city, another nation, another heart.

Scripture has quite a gallery of donkey-givers: One day by the Sea of Galilee, thousands of people wanted to hear the words of life from the lips of Jesus. He needed a platform from which to speak to that throng. There was a boat close by, right at water's edge. One of Jesus' disciples probably approached the owner of the boat and asked, "Would it be alright if Jesus sits in your boat while he addresses these people?" And the owner said, "He's welcome to use my boat." **That boat owner was a donkey-giver, so to speak.**

Later, Jesus was addressing another vast crowd on a hillside. They had listened for hours and were craving to hear more. But it had been a long time since they had eaten anything. Stomachs were growling and children were whining. The disciple Philip found a teenaged boy who had two small pickled fish and five loaves of barley bread. Philip asked him, "Are you willing to give your lunch basket to Jesus?" "Gladly," said the boy, never dreaming that he and 10,000 other people would eat from that lunch basket which miraculously was never emptied. **That boy was a donkey-giver.**

Later, when the shadow of an awful cross was lengthening ominously and tension was building toward a crescendo, Jesus needed a day off, a quiet day, a 24-hour relief from the crowds. Mary and Martha and Lazarus, long-time friends of Jesus from Bethany, gave him their home and hospitality. (we heard about this hospitable family in the Gospel of last Sunday..... at the death of Lazarus). Mary especially honored him with her sensitive listening and caring conversation. **Jesus was blessed by a family of donkey-givers.**

Then, on that momentous crucifixion day when the skies were darkened at noon in a heartbreaking spasm of the solar system, Jesus dragged a heavy cross toward the place of execution. His loss of blood and sleep had sapped his strength. He collapsed beneath that splintery cross. His face was battered into the filth of the hard path, filling his mouth with grit and blood. Then a Roman soldier, eager to get this grisly business finished, tapped a stranger on the shoulder and said, "pick up that cross and carry it for him." **Simon didn't have much choice in the matter. But for the rest of eternity he would rejoice that he lent his shoulder and his strength to bear the Master's cross. He too was a donkey-giver.**

People are still giving things to the Master so that he can move his kingdom further down the road. You cannot be in relationship with Jesus and not be on mission. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)

When God honors Christ Church by sending us a new member, we should ask God to show us what He is up to. He sends each member to us not only for that member's good but also to expand the work of His Kingdom. The gifts and graces of each new member expand the capability of the church. God wants to touch and transform Lansing and indeed to reach around the world.

Often we become so self-centered. We are forever praying, "O God, bless me. Bless my family, my business, my golf game and my football team." Then God replies, "I want to bless you, but not necessarily in the way you expect. I want you to deny self. Pick up a cross and follow me. I will lead you to places where I am working, and I'll include you. You will be an instrument in my hand. And as you pour out yourself in my name, you will receive the mother of all blessings."

Some of you may want some scriptural authority for what I've been telling you. Some of you are like a husband I heard about who told his wife that housework was woman's work and he would not help with it unless she could find a Bible verse that commended that kind of work to a man. That wife prayed and went to work on her Bible. Before long she came to him with her Bible open to II Kings 21:13, where we read: "God says, 'I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.'" That husband picked up his dishcloth and headed for the kitchen.

*Let me give you some scripture to back up my claim that all of us Christians are ministers or donkey-givers. St. Paul said to the Romans, "We (meaning all of us) have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." To the Corinthians he wrote this: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Then Paul listed some of an endless list of spiritual gifts-- prophecy, teaching, giving, leadership, compassion, wisdom, and healing. **What's your gift? Are you using it for his glory?** Have you identified it? Are you using it? **Are you a donkey-giver?***

One day an older woman, a bank executive, was walking past one of the offices at the bank. She glanced in and saw a young woman sitting at her desk, crying. The executive went in to see if she could help. "Nothing's that bad," she said. "Tell me about it." The younger woman explained: "My mother died about a month ago. Just this past weekend I became engaged. We have planned a June wedding. But I don't know the first thing to do, and I don't have a mother to help me." "Oh yes you do," said the executive. "I'll be your mother!" As they hugged each other, an incredible friendship was born-- all because one person saw two things: a hurting person and a ministry that she could provide.

Five hundred years from now, as we delight in the glory of God's kingdom, we will not even remember how much money we earned on earth or how big our houses were or whether we had much status or popularity. But we will celebrate forever every single donkey we gave to the Master!

During this time when many people are scared and not knowing what is going on around them because of the sad news we hear and see from every corner of the world....Let us be a light in the darkened world of someone by giving someone a call and talk to someone about HOPE...! **We can be the Donkey-Giver or the donkey itself!**

People often speak of donkeys in belittling terms. You may have heard the expression, "I'm just someone who has to do all the donkey work." Or "So-and-so is as stubborn as a mule" (a Mule is part donkey).

These sayings overlook the contributions of a truly valuable animal. Donkeys have served the human race for thousands of years. They were once prized as symbols of humility, gentleness, and peace.

In Bible days, donkeys that had never been ridden were regarded as especially suitable for religious purposes. So it was most fitting that Jesus sent for a colt to perform the royal task of carrying Him into Jerusalem. How enviable was that donkey's mission! How like our mission as Jesus' followers!

A missionary in China calls herself "the Lord's donkey." She's a humble believer, "carrying" her Lord faithfully into town after town and training others to do likewise. The Lord has need of many such "donkeys" in today's world, humble people who will carry Him into their Jerusalem and make Him known.

*Finally; The donkey we are discussing today, had to be untied before Jesus could use it. We too must be released from worldly attachments if we are to serve Christ. **Are we willing to be the Lord's donkey or a Donkey Giver?** May the Good Lord continue to strengthen us to be BOTH especially during these difficult times. Let us promote the sense of community by texting and checking on each other. By bringing a smile to someone who otherwise would be sad.*