

Holy Week in Biblical Perspective  
*Palm Sunday*  
“Why Did the King of Kings Need a Donkey?”  
Matthew 21:1–11  
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March 20, 2016 – Morning sermon

All four Gospels record the event that we will focus on in this study, the triumphal entry. We focus on the Matthew text but we will refer to the others as well. This is Holy Week and we will be following the steps of Jesus to celebrate, be encouraged, be equipped and use as an outreach opportunity. This is God’s Word and that means this is the Truth. Matthew 21:1–11 says [1] *Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, [2] saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. [3] If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” [4] This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,*

[5] *“Say to the daughter of Zion,  
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”*

*[6] The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. [7] They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. [8] Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. [9] And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” [10] And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” [11] And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I have been asked recently as our society is advancing in technology if we’ll ever have church by FaceBook or social media where you’ll just tune in and sing along. I’m certainly grateful for all this supplemental stuff that technology provides for those who can’t make it to gathered worship but there is no substitute for what the church is – the ecclesia, the gathered ones – where we assemble together to speak to one another, to hear the Word of God and pray together. That was reinforced this week of how important this is.

I posted on social media the title of this sermon, “Why Did the King of Kings need a Donkey?” I can’t tell you how many varied responses I received in various ways on this. I don’t think they realized that it was a title to get them to come to worship but they thought it was a question they were supposed to answer. Most everyone seemingly got it right because they all said the King needed a donkey because when one comes on a donkey they are proclaiming peace but when one comes on the white stallion they are coming to make war. So Jesus was coming as the Prince of Peace by coming on the donkey and would make peace for sinners at the cross. When He comes again He will come on a white horse to destroy all of His enemies. Those are all right but that really wasn’t what I was asking.

Culturally and Biblically that response is right and I have actually preached that but I was saying ‘why does the **Lord “need”** a donkey?’ Forget the word donkey because the focus

would be on 'Lord' and 'need.' The Lord is a title of deity and sovereignty and here Jesus is affirming His deity and His sovereignty. When He told the disciples to tell the owner of the donkey and colt to say "The Lord, the sovereign God, needs the donkey" but you also have been well taught and that the Lord by definition needs nothing. Here He uses the name of deity and sovereignty in His title but then says He needs something. All one would need to do is turn to Acts 17 where the Apostle Paul says 'do you think the Lord needs to be served by human hands for He is the Lord of Glory and He is over all, made all and sustains all for He does not need anything.' So what does this mean when Jesus says this?

Why would the Lord need? Is this a contradiction? The Bible tells us that God is self-sufficient in and of Himself, needs nothing and no one but now we see it says the Lord needed a donkey, so is this a contradiction? Could this be some theological sloppiness? No because perhaps it could have been said a different way without using the word need. The only problem is I believe in verbal plenary inspiration. I believe this is God's Word and every Word is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Lord and need are there for a reason. I don't think it is indicating sloppiness or a contradiction. I think it's a very life changing concept and I'm hoping God will allow me to explain it to you.

So let's get back into the context of where we are. We are following the steps of Jesus for this entire week but coming to this Palm Sunday, this triumphal entry, not only did it start when Jesus was baptized but it became His public ministry as Prophet, Priest and King, the Messiah, the Anointed One but the screws were really tightened just a few days before this event all the way up to Mount Hermon at Caesarea Philippi, where He says to them in Matthew 16:15–18a, 21–23, [15] *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"* [16] *Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* [17] *And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18a] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*[21] From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. [22] And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." [23] But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."* Then it says He set His face toward Jerusalem.

The Northern most part of Israel is Mount Hermon and six days later He stops off at the Sea of Galilee and ascends another mountain. There is the Mount of Transfiguration as He is lifted up with Moses and Elijah, the law and the Prophets, pointing to Him, there before Peter, James, and John. The Father says 'This is My Son in whom I am pleased, listen to Him' and they are going to want to remember that because this same Father will be separated from them at the cross not many days later. He will hear the Son cry out, 'My God, My God why has Thou forsaken Me.' They go from the Sea of Galilee to Jericho where He heals two blind me.

Sometimes I struggle in my ministry to children of knowing how to relate to them and there are a couple of events in the Bible that always bail me out. One of them is at Jericho where Zacchaeus was the wee little man and I get to sing that song with them. Jesus ministered to Zacchaeus in a glorious moment and then He begins a 17 mile journey from Jericho to Jerusalem, being uphill all the way. They were very likely singing the Psalms of ascent, as they ascended the hill to go to Jerusalem, the City of the King. People would go to the temple to

worship. Right before Jesus gets to Jerusalem He stops on a Friday, where He has stopped on numerous occasions.

He stops at a little village on the Eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives is 2700 feet high and it has four peaks on it. Just two miles short of the top there is a city called Bethany. There Jesus stayed with Mary, Martha and Lazarus and word was already out about what Jesus did to Lazarus, raising him from the dead. All these crowds are coming out to Lazarus particularly when they hear Jesus is there. Among those crowds is the Sanhedrin and they have put together a plot to kill Jesus yet Jesus is about to destroy their plot and get them on His timetable. That Saturday He keeps Sabbath, a day of rest, the next to last Old Covenant Sabbath. When the sun goes down and the Sabbath is over they have kind of a dinner party. At the dinner party Jesus is anointed as the expensive ointment is poured upon Him by this woman who Jesus announces has anointed Him for His burial.

The next day is Sunday and He gets up to go to the city of the King. It is Palm Sunday, the triumphal entry. All kinds of things will happen in this coming week and we'll follow them here at the church in various ways. The triumphal Sunday is kind of like coronation day. He will leave this city and go back to Bethany. He'll spend a few nights on the side of the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane. He will come back on Monday and will cleanse the Temple which will be the second time He does this because of people blaspheming and profaning the Temple. Then He'll come back the next day where there will be teaching, parables, controversies, discussions and then there will be a day of rest on a Wednesday. He will teach about the second coming on the side of the Mount of Olives. He will tell them what will happen with the Temple and Jerusalem within a generation. Then on Thursday He will celebrate the Last Supper, the Passover and the first Lord's Supper. He will institute it and we'll do that this coming Thursday, just as He did it.

Then He'll go back out to the Garden and there He will be entering into prayer where His capillaries will burst with blood in His intercessory prayer. He is ready to go to the cross. He will be betrayed, arrested and go through six trials – three Gentile and three Jewish – and then He'll go to the cross. There as we remember the seven words of Christ on the cross, He gave up His Spirit and then they laid Him in the tomb. Then He rested for the very last Old Covenant Sabbath and then the first day, the Lord's Day, is resurrection Sabbath. He comes forth in triumph from the grave entering into a forty day ministry. On the very first day He makes 15 appearances and one is to Mary Magdalene and various others. On that evening He'll appear to the Disciples in the Upper Room. Then after 40 days of ministry He'll back to the Mount of Olives where He'll ascend into the heavens and He will come again when the Great Commission is completed by the body of Christ, taking it throughout all of the world.

That is the overview but now let's take a closer view. What exactly happens on that Palm Sunday, that triumphal entry? I like to call it a coronation day. I love to take people on trips to give them insight while they are onsite and one of those trips have to do with the Reformers in England and Scotland. One time while in Scotland, I was on High Street visiting the various aspects related to the Reformation and all of a sudden there is this buzz where horns are going off, people are talking about and everyone is rushing down this hill where this palace is that the kings and queens occupy. Then I hear people say "The Queen is in the palace! Royalty has arrived!" I said, 'how do they know this?' They said "See the royal flag is flying" which meant the Queen was in the palace.

What is happening on this Sunday with Jesus is like raising the royal flag. The King of Kings has come to the city of the Great King and He has announced His presence. He has done

so in a very intentional way and because of this it gives something for us to be encouraged by of how important God allows us to be, of how significant God's redeeming work in us allows us to be. That is what I want you to see. So while at Bethany, before He gets to the top at Bethphage, He sends two disciples to get a donkey and colt and tells the disciples if the owner asks then say 'the Lord has need of them' and he will give them to you. The two disciples run on ahead.

I'm grateful for all the Gospels that record this event but I particularly like Matthew and Luke's version for a couple of reasons. Matthew is the one who reminds us that there are two donkeys and the others don't for they just focus on the colt. Matthew tells us that one is the mother and one is the colt, the foal of the mother. The Lord wants the disciples to bring both of them, why? If the colt is still with the mother then that means the colt is not yet weaned which means the colt had not been ridden. So now the colt is not only fulfilling prophecy but it can also be set aside for a sacred use. Since the colt had been ridden or weaned I'm sure it didn't like the idea of leaving its mother so both were brought to Jesus. Luke is the one that tells us when they went to get the donkeys the owner questions them. I love the honesty of the Scriptures. The disciples say 'the Lord has need of them' and immediately the owner released the donkeys to them.

When they arrive there at the Mount of Olives the people do three things. One is they take their cloaks and put them on the colt where Jesus sits upon the cloak, not touching the donkey. The people are responding very much like they did in the days of Jehu where they would lay down their cloaks so that the king would not have to sit on the ground and in obedience to the Psalms they cut palm branches that were placed in the front of the donkey. They put it down in concert with singing a Psalm, Psalm 118:25–26. They are singing Hosanna which means 'the Lord has come to save us.' Hosanna in the Highest for the One, the Highest has come to save us in the city of the great King. Blessed by the name of the Lord, why? He has come to save us and redeem us. They shout out, 'Blessed by the name of the Lord, the Son of David.'

How do they know this is the Messiah, the Anointed One? Why is it when they see Him come in on the donkey that they respond like they did in the days of old when a king arrived and they spread their cloaks? Why did they do what the Psalmist says as they cut the palm branches in adoration and lay them before the pathway of the colt? Why do they sing Psalm 118:25–26, the Psalms of the Messiah? I believe it has to do with the donkey. I will show you why for there were three things that they would have known.

Realize that the crowd has expanded by now. There is not only the crowd that was with Jesus which include His disciples and all the onlookers from Bethany but there is another group of people coming out of the city. It is such a great crowd that the whole city is being stirred up wanting to know what is going on. All those plans of the Sanhedrin are now going to have to be rewritten and Jesus will put them on His timetable. All of this is happening because this crowd has gathered proclaiming Him as the Messiah, the King has come. The flag is being raised. It is the city of the King. The King has come and the city is abuzz at the moment.

What is it about this donkey? Yes when a King showed up on a donkey it meant that they came on a mission of peace. So Jesus has come to the city on a mission of peace but as soon as He gets off this donkey He is going to war. He is not going to war with those people but with His enemies – sin, Satan, hell, death, grave, the world, the flesh – and He is going to defeat it at the cross. By doing that He can announce the Gospel of Peace for He has come to make peace between us and God by saving us from our sins. Certainly that is true culturally about the

donkey but there is something else at work in the minds of these people. We look at some passages of Scriptures so you can see the three reasons why they know this is the King.

The reasons they are singing the Psalms of the Messiah, putting the palms in front of Him as the Messiah, and spreading the cloaks that they would do for the King is because of the donkey. The donkey is the key for why Jesus needed to ride into that city. The first reason is that the donkey is the fulfillment of the proclamation. In Genesis 49 the people of Israel as a nation are being established through the family of Abraham and we come now to Jacob blessing his sons. The fourth in line is Judah. This is the blessing of Jacob upon Judah.

Genesis 49:8–12 says [8] *Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. [9] Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? [10] The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. [11] Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. [12] His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.*

He is telling us that this One of Judah is the Vine. Does this sound familiar? Jesus says “I am the Vine.” This One shall be upon the colt of the donkey and will fight the battle to His death. His eyes will be darkened. He will pour Himself out and defeat His enemies. He bring the tribute of His victory that He secures with His death and as He does that He will have a scepter for He will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All of His people will bow before Him for He is the Lord. He is the Lion of Judah, the King who will win the victory over His enemies as He puts His foot upon their neck and destroys them. He will purchase our redemption and if you know Christ then you are the tribute that He brings to glory as the triumphant King. When He comes to win this battle how will He come? The Lion of Judah, becoming the Lamb of God will come on a colt of a donkey. They know this blessing from the tribe of Judah.

We know that is not only from the tribe of Judah but it's from one line in the tribe of Judah, the line of David. So the second reason is the fulfillment of precedent. We see this in I Kings 1. Here David is being succeeded by his son, Solomon. The Messiah will be a son of David. Solomon is not the Messiah but a type of the Messiah. How will Solomon be coronated? I Kings 1:32–34 says [32] *King David said, “Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came before the king. [33] And the king said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. [34] And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’*

This is so important that is repeated again. I Kings 1:38, 44 says [38] *So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule and brought him to Gihon. [44] and the king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites. And they had him ride on the king's mule.* Then they proclaimed him king. So the people know not only was there a proclamation but by precedent that it's not only the tribe of Judah but the line of David. The very first King after David ascends to the throne by riding on the derivative of the donkey, he rides upon the mule.

The third reason is by prophecy. We see this in Zechariah 9:9–10 which says [9] *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a*

*colt, the foal of a donkey. [10] I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.* Here is the King that is coming, not to make war on the nations but to make war on His enemies to bring the Gospel of Peace to all the nations and He comes prophetically on the foal of a donkey.

So why did the Lord need it, the donkey? He needed it to fulfill prophecy, precedent and proclamation. I know why it had to be a donkey and so do the people for the flag is flying that this is the King of Kings. Spread the cloak, throw the palms and shout “Hosanna, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” So why is it important for us to know that the Lord needs it?

Here is the takeaway. The Lord of Glory in all of His sufficiency has not only sovereignly promised to save His people from their sins but has also sovereignly entrusted to His people the means He will use to save them. An unmerited, undeserved love was poured out from this sufficient Savior to save us from our sins. It was a relentless and unstoppable love. If you’re reading this today without a Savior then know He came to save you so that no longer would you be His enemy but redeemed. Notice He has entrusted the means to us and not the merits.

How did you get saved if you know Him? Somebody prayed for you and the Lord entrusted the means of prayer to others to intercede for you. How did you become a Christian? Somebody shared the Gospel with you because you are saved by faith and faith comes from hearing the Word. So somebody had been entrusted with the privilege to bring the Gospel to you whether it was through a preacher or teacher or relative or friend. Someone knew they were entrusted with the call to share the Gospel and the Lord had ordained the need of them to share the Gospel. It was through the need of them praying. You have not because you ask not. They brought to you not just any message but a life changing message, the Gospel, which you needed to hear to become a Christian that Jesus entrusted to the church and to that person to bring to you.

Then He has entrusted His church with gifts, spiritual gifts. All who know Jesus Christ have a spiritual gift. I don’t know what you are in the body of Christ but you are necessary because God put you there and your ministry is needed in the body of Christ. Then God puts resources in the body. I praise the Lord for what He is doing through you in this church through faith promise and the Great Commission. This is just trying to affirm something for you. God doesn’t give me resources for me to be the subject of a reality show of hoarders. He got it to me to get it through me. He didn’t give me a gift to be in the body of Christ for me to feel significant. He got it to me to use it. Pour yourself out as a drink offering. Preach the Word. He has given you a gift and that’s why you have to say you won’t play drive-by church. I will be a member of the body of Christ for I have been given a gift from the Lord who gave it to me because He needs it. It is not me coming with something He needs but it’s me coming with what He gave me that He needs.

They didn’t make that donkey. God made that donkey and then gave it to them because He would need it. So He provided it through them. God has given you a gift. We don’t work up our gifts for He gives us our gifts. God gave you the resources you have. God gave you the Gospel. God gave you an open door to call upon the Lord in prayer at anytime, anywhere and at any moment. God has given you the privilege to share the Gospel – to plant, water, cultivate, reap – and He has given it because He needs it and has ordained to use it so we are not

bringing something the Lord doesn't have but we are bringing what the Lord has given to us by creation.

In creation He made it. In redemption He secured it. In His providence He has given it to you. So what you say is what that owner said 'Here.' Here is my gift. I'm going to use it in the body of Christ. Here are my resources. Here is my prayer life. Here is the Gospel. I'm going to give it away. The Lord gave it to me and that is what He ordained to use so He needs what He gave to me to bring it. You may say 'well, I'm not going to show up.' That won't stop God for He won't be stopped but what you will miss is the blessing.

How many of you think that owner said 'Can you believe it, the Messiah took my donkey for the whole day. I didn't even get to use that donkey that day? Do you think the boy said 'can you believe He took my fishes and loaves'? God made you a man or a woman. You are saved by His grace, now do you want to go from here just being a man or a woman or do you want to be a man of God or a woman of God? God I want to give it to You and I give it to You because You gave it to me.

There are no unimportant people in the Kingdom of God. There are no superfluous gifts. There are no wasted moments in prayer. There is no misuse of the Gospel when it is rightly proclaimed and shared. Our Lord didn't come to us to think of it but our Lord has secured it and given it to us to bring to Him because we love Him and say 'use it.' But the first thing we bring is ourselves. Here am I. I am no longer on the trash heap of sin for I am washed in the blood, clothes with His righteousness and now instead of a man or woman of sin, I am a man or woman of God.

Maybe today you haven't made that commitment to Christ. I want to give you the opportunity to do that. Maybe you have made that commitment but today is a brand new day to understand that everything you have the Lord says 'bring it, I need it, that's why I gave it to you.' Let's pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. Dear friend, maybe today you have come looking and you found out that there was a Savior who went looking for you and went to the cross. He used disciples, a city, palm branches, a donkey and He used two old wooden beams to take upon Himself the judgment of our sin so that you and I could have eternal life. Now He says come just like you are and put your trust in Me. I would be glad to talk and pray with you, just contact me at (205) 776-5200. Today can be forever. The King has come and the King will reside in you and raise the flag of His presence. Father, I want to thank you for my brothers and sisters for I'm constantly astounded that I have the privilege to serve You with them and to learn alongside of them. Would You allow us to learn from an unnamed owner who made available what You gave him simply because You said 'the Lord needs it.' It amazes us what You have given us and even that You have ordained to use us and need us so here we are. We only ask that the joy of our salvation might resound to all the nations for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Life Takeaway

The Lord of Glory in all of His Sufficiency has not only Sovereignly promised to save His people from their sins, but has also Sovereignly entrusted to His people the Means He will use to save them.