

Mark 11:1-11

³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it...'

Dear Christian Friends,

It is fairly safe to say that, on land, Jesus never rode. Even in Mary's womb, we don't know that Mary rode a donkey like so many pictures show. We do know, though, that he walked everywhere - even walked on water - to get to places. So this was a rather unusual command, when Jesus said to the disciples, most likely Peter and John: ***Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.***

It is also likely that there was some hesitation on the part of the disciples. I mean, the equivalent today would be: Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you'll find a car parked on the side of the road with the keys in the ignition. Start it up and drive it here.

So, not only was it an unusual command by Jesus, but it had the potential to place the disciples in an awkward position, to say the least. You can imagine the initial reaction from them: Uh, you sure about that Jesus? I mean, somebody might wonder why we're walking off with their mode of transportation. At the very least, the disciples would have likely given Jesus a questioning glance.

So don't do it, right? It doesn't make sense. It's awkward. It could be uncomfortable. It could even be dangerous. So don't do it, right? We might think so. And let's be frank, we have probably even done so. How many times haven't we heard the Word of the Lord to love others above ourselves and failed to do so? How many times haven't we heard the Word of the Lord to ***listen*** to the Word of the Lord but failed to actually ***do what it says***? How many times haven't we heard the Word of the Lord to ***Let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly*** only to limit our time in the Word to Sunday worship spoon-feeding? How many times haven't we heard the Word

of the Lord to ***Let [our] lights shine*** in this world only to hide ours under a basket, trusting that someone else will do the shining? Come on, Lord, it doesn't make sense. It's awkward. It could be uncomfortable. It could even be dangerous. Yes, we know exactly how the disciples might have felt, huh?

And so Jesus lovingly reassures with the words of our focus this morning. He said, ***If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it ...'*** You can almost hear the disciples mutter something like, "If you say so, Lord." But in faith and trust they went. St. Augustine would later write, *Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.* And when they arrived in the village, it all happened just as Jesus said.

But before we get too far down the road, we need to pause and take a closer look at a curious phrase: ***The Lord needs it.*** That phrase is rather curious because the Bible is clear: God doesn't need anything. In fact the psalm appointed for this Palm Sunday – Psalm 24 – opens with the words, ***The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*** So what could the Lord of all creation possibly need from a human being?

We human beings certainly need *him*. We needed him, who is ***in very nature God***, to ***consider equality with God something NOT to be grasped.*** We needed him to make ***himself nothing***, to take on ***the very nature of a servant***, to be ***made in human likeness.*** We desperately needed him to ***humble himself and [become] obedient to death-- even death on a cross!*** For without the sacrifice of his innocent life, our guilty lives would be forever ***lost*** in our ***transgressions and sins.*** We needed him alright. And we needed him to indeed be raised from ***death*** so that we too can look forward to our own rising from the dead to eternal life. Certainly, we human beings need him.

So we're still left asking, what could the Lord of creation possibly need from a human being? And in this case, it was, what could the Lord of creation possibly need from a donkey's colt? Well, the answer is to be found in the Word for "need." The same

word for need here in the original Greek, is the same word used in many other places in the New Testament. For example it is the same word Jesus used when he lovingly assured, *Your heavenly Father knows what you need*. It is the same word that Jesus used to confront the Pharisees, *it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick*. It is the same word Jesus used when he challenged his disciples on the grassy hillside where thousands would be fed, *They do not need to go away to be fed. You give them something to eat*. And it is the same word used by the High Priest as Jesus was condemned for blasphemy in his court, *We do not need any more testimony. You have heard it from his own lips*.

And if you listened closely, you'll find that every time the word *need* was used, it was for the benefit of others. You see, Jesus needed that donkey that day, not because *he* needed it, but because *you and I* needed him to need it. You see, it was all part of the plan – God's plan – of salvation. You heard part of it from the prophet Zechariah a few moments ago: *Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*.

This is just one of the blatantly specific and the more than 300 references to the coming Messiah in the Old Testament - who the Messiah would be and what he would do. It has been estimated by modern scholars that the chances of fulfilling even only 8 of these prophecies is one chance in 100 million billion. To once again put this into perspective, as Pastor Cordes did a number of weeks ago, it was stated that if each of those chances – 100 million billion – were represented by a silver dollar, they would fill the State of Texas to the depth of two feet. If you marked just one of those coins and then allowed a blind-folded person only one guess, the chances of the person going to the exact spot and picking up the one marked coin would be the same as Jesus fulfilling just 8 Old Testament prophecies, much less all 300 of them.

Yet that is exactly what *Jesus* needed to do, because *we* needed him to do it. Jesus

needed to fulfill each and every one of those prophecies because that was God's plan *for us and our salvation*. Jesus needed that donkey because you and I needed him to ride it. Though he rode into Jerusalem that day to shouts of acclamation and waving branches, and strewn cloaks, and cries of joy, he needed to do it, just as the hymnist accurately states, *in lowly pomp, rid[ing] on to die* so that *we* can live.

So what does he need from you? Oh, I know, we've already established that he doesn't need anything. And yet, it is clear that God created us and has sanctified in us a deep spiritual need to respond to all that he has done for us. Our need, therefore, is his need. You have been gifted with time and talents, treasures and testimony...and *the Lord has need of it* for your sake and mine and for the sake of those with the deepest and most desperate of needs: the message of Jesus Christ and him crucified. So whatever it is with which you have been blessed, consider it and then give it. Lay it before him. Shout it about him. Wave it at him. And *rejoice, daughter of Jerusalem, for your Lord has need of it* for the benefit of his people and the furthering of his kingdom. Amen.

Ride on, King Jesus, let no one hinder you.
Amen.