

The Lord Has Need
Mark 11:1-10
April 5, 2009

After all these years, I am still fascinated with the Palm Sunday story; because it proclaims a truth: that the God of monotheism is a God who has need.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, His parents had to borrow a stable because there was no room at the inn. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, Jesus borrowed a donkey.

This thought came together for me this week when reading an old anonymous poem written centuries earlier: “They borrowed a bed to lay His head when Christ the Lord came down; they borrowed the ass in the mountain pass for Him to ride to town; but the crown he wore and the Cross he bore were His own...”

(1). Monotheism is unique in that most believe there are things which God does need.

Historians of many faiths would agree that John Wesley was one of the most brilliant people of the 18th century. Wesley read in eight different languages, wrote over 440 books, and his “methodical” ministry spread like wild fire from the halls of Oxford, England to the colonies of America.

Today world wide 75 million people belong to a “Methodist” church. But in Wesley’s day not everyone was impressed: One woman wrote to him: “Mr. Wesley, I have been instructed by the Lord to tell you that God has no need of your learning.”

To which Wesley replied, “Madame, while I have no direct word from the Lord on this matter, I feel constrained to tell you that the Lord has no need of your ignorance either!”

Still, there are things which God does need.
On that first Palm Sunday Jesus needed a donkey.

Why, I wonder? Here is this peasant rabbi carpenter who walked on foot all the way from Galilee in the north, down almost the entire east bank of the Jordan River; who on that first Palm Sunday now stops within sight of the Holy City of Jerusalem to borrow a donkey for the remaining two mile walk.

Why? Because riding into Jerusalem on a donkey was a Messianic sign foretold by the Hebrew prophets. However, no where in scripture does Jesus say out and out, “I am the Messiah.” Messiah is a Hebrew word that translates into Greek as Christ.”

Jesus did not use the title because people had so many different ideas- most of them wrong- of what the Messiah would be like.
In the first century, under Roman occupation, Messiah was understood to mean a conquering military hero like King David.

Jesus, in the oldest of the four gospels, Mark; never comes right out and says, “I am the Messiah.” But Jesus does Messiah like things, like riding a donkey into town. Mark, being not only the oldest, but the shortest gospel doesn’t elaborate on the point of Messiahship.

Luke's gospel comes from a gentile who doesn't have a clue as to the reason or meaning of Messiahship. Matthew, the most Jewish of gospels, picks up on the symbolism right away.

Matthew reminds his fellow Jews of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9:

“Tell the daughters of Zion, Behold, and your new King is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey.” The Lord has need.

God surely chose even a place for the small and weak on that first Palm Sunday. I believe Jesus held in His heart a special place for children.

Remember He said:” Whoever receives one such child receives me; and whoever receives me receives the God who sent me.” Mark 9:37

Did You Get That? The great God almighty, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, Creator and Sustainer of the universe, awaits us with welcoming arms.

God will not force us or coerce us, but God will come to us in the face of a child. The implications for us are all too clear. Whenever we spend time with the weak, the sick, or infirmed, we are spending time with God.

Whenever we side with the oppressed against the oppressors, we are on the side of God. The Lord Has Need.

-Page 4-

(2). Years ago I heard an old southern preacher say that:

“The Lord Needs Us, Everyone; But Not Much.” He had a point. Century after century theologians have debated the age old question, “Does God know the future?” The debate is if God does know the future, then what kind of freedom do we have?

This question has strained brains over the centuries, and I am still working on a good answer. But there is an image which I have found to be helpful. I remember being on the top of Mt. Hermon over looking the border between Israel and Lebanon. Mt. Hermon gets a 43 inch average rain fall per year.

Whether it falls in the form of rain or snow, eventually that water finds its way down the mountain and becomes part of the Jordan River. (Read Psalm 133) Now, when that rain falls on that mountain, we know one thing for sure: eventually it will get to the bottom of the mountain.

But who knows how many detours it will take in getting there? It might zig and zag all over the place, but sooner or later, it gets there.”

I look upon that rainfall as a symbol of God’s will. Sooner or later God’s will “will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” God would prefer sooner than later, but God has given us free will. We can frustrate God’s purposes, if we wish.

We are God’s primary obstacle in achieving God’s purposes. But eventually God’s will is going to get done-with us or without us.

God would prefer with us... but God will not force us into obedience.

That must be freely given

And so, while we may slow down the coming of God's kingdom, we cannot stop it. So "Does God know the future? Does God know the future for us?"

I would reply: God Is The Future.

And to bet our lives on God is the only sure thing I know.

Have you ever stopped to think that there are some things that God is never going to get done in this world, unless God gets them done through you?

You may be a small instrument in a big parade, but as school band directors often tell their reluctant musicians, "If you have a part to play, and you don't play it, you will be missed."

That's true. None of us is indispensable, but each of us is irreplaceable.

When God made you God broke the mold. You are unique: and you are called to perform a unique function.

When I meet my maker I do not expect God to ask me, "Jim, why were you not more like Jesus?" I believe God will say to me, "Jim, why were you not more like your true self."

God Is the future. And God wants us to be in the future with God.

But if God can't work with us, God will work around us.

Sometimes the biggest obstacle to getting God's will done in the world is us.

What if we prayed: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done...in Me!"

That changes things a bit. Most of us are quite willing to have God's will be done- as long as it does not cost us anything.

This should be the job of Franklin Church.

To widen the skirts of light and make the struggle with darkness narrower.

THE LORD HAS NEED...

of the faithful, those of us willing to meet God's needs.

(3) What will be our response?

What kind of response would we have given on that first Palm Sunday question?

I believe each of us has some gift or skill that can be put to the use of God's kingdom. Do you have a personality that can be the instrument of God's truth? Can your feet go on God's errands? Can your hands help lift another's burdens?

If the man in today's gospel lesson who owned the donkey had treated Jesus' request the same way we often treat God's call for help, would things have gone differently?

What do you say when you hear:

"The Lord has need of something?"

Do you say: what do I care? Or I must first take care of my own needs? God please just leave me alone. Of course, we wouldn't be that blunt about it, but we do it just the same. God needs our time: "Sorry, but my time is limited. Besides, it's my time."

God needs our strength: "Sorry, I can't take on a single thing more.

-Page 7-

“God, I am just too exhausted from taking care of my own needs. I’ve got trouble of my own.”

God needs our money: “Sorry, I just can’t cut or do without.”

God you make to many demands on us. Don’t call me; I’ll call you. And so it goes.

What kind of priority does God and humanity get with us?

Does God’s needs get our first priority?

Who is your neighbor? Jesus reminds us that EVERYONE is our neighbor.

Whether we like it or not. And we are to love God and neighbor as we love ourselves.

If you can see God in your neighbor than you should serve both.

Again Jesus taught that whatever you do to your neighbor you do to God.

The Lord has need- of our time, talent and treasurer.

Civil War General George McClellan was a genius at dithering; he found a million reasons to keep from doing his duty. So President Lincoln often said McClellan had “a case of the slows.”

So Lincoln sent McClellan a telegram saying:

“If you haven’t any plans for the Army of the Potomac, would you mind lending it to me for awhile?”

God says the same thing about our lives.

“If you aren’t going to do anything with them, will you loan them to me for awhile?”

THE LORD HAS NEED.

-Page 8-

In today's gospel lesson the Lord had need of a donkey.
And I have come to the conclusion that if the Lord has need of a donkey, the Lord
may even have need of us!

For we all act the donkey's at times.
Stubborn and always wanting our own way! But God will use us, anyway.
We are God's plan for the redemption of the world.

When Jesus came into our world, all of us donkeys got raised to a new level.
God can use even us. **THE LORD HAS NEED.** Can God have you?

AMEN!