

Mark 11:1-10 [NIV]

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "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. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

We're in the eleventh chapter of the book of Mark today. I encourage you to take a Bible and turn there, if you would. Mark's gospel, Chapter 11.

I am 53 years old, and I grew up in the church, which means that I've heard this account of what we've come to call "Palm Sunday" 53 times, at least.

Through those years, it has always been a source of wonder to me — different elements of it at different times.

For instance, why the donkey? Why did Jesus ride anything at all, but specifically, why a donkey? For that matter, why do this at all? Why the spectacle?

Why did the crowd react this way to Jesus on this day, but then very differently only a few days later? Why palm branches and hosannas?

I realize now that there are either theological or prophetic or cultural answers to those wonderings, but here's another question I remember thinking about as a little kid: Did the disciples that Jesus sent to "borrow" the donkey feel any anxiety or concern about just walking into town and up to this home and taking a donkey? Did they feel they were doing something risky or wrong or maybe even illegal?

Did it ever cross their minds that they might be questioned or confronted or even arrested for taking something that did not belong to them, even if it was *Jesus* who said to do it?

Did even a question about doing this run through their minds, and if so, why did they go ahead and do it anyway?

Has anyone else ever wondered that?

I mean, to take a *donkey* is a big deal.

Now, you don't hear too much about "donkey theft" today, I realize, but back in Jesus' time, donkeys were significant and too expensive for most people to own.

In our American culture today, a car or truck would be close in purpose to a donkey in the first century, and cars today are far more commonly owned than donkeys were back then. And if you steal a car today, well, that's a big deal, right? In some places and instances, that's a felony crime.

So, how do you suppose the disciples felt — what ran through their minds — when Jesus asked them to slip in there and, let's say, "appropriate" that donkey?

I'd think there was at some tension or anxiousness, at the very least some amount of *wonder* as they untied the leads there and began to walk away.

Contextually, it's no different, really, than one of us getting into someone else's car in their driveway, starting it up and backing it into the street.

Can you imagine doing that, not knowing if the owner is going to come running out of the house to see what's going on. And then when they come out and say, "What are you doing?" imagine just answering, "Um, the Lord needs this and will send it back in a bit."

How do you suppose that would go if you tried doing that on your street today? You can imagine, right?

"What? What are you talking about? Who's 'the Lord'? And how do I know he'll bring it back — or you'll bring it back — or anyone will bring it back? Oh no, you stay right there. I'm calling the police!"

So, how did this whole donkey-sharing arrangement happen anyway? Have you ever wondered?

There's speculation about that, and a couple of different theories.

Some think that Jesus, knowing that He would be going to Jerusalem and all, had made the arrangement with the owners on an earlier trip. He set this all up and got their permission weeks or maybe months before this moment.

And that's certainly a possibility.

At the same time, others think this was an expression of His divine power, and that Jesus miraculously made the donkey owner pre-disposed to let them just take it.

Was one of these the case, or is there another explanation? We don't know, and this side of glory, we probably *won't* know.

But you see, apparently, neither did the disciples back then know, and yet they still did what Jesus told them to do: even something that was challenging; something that certainly seemed strange; something that rather pushed against their mores; something that seemed at least risky and even dangerous, to a degree.

And still, they did it.

Why?

There's only one reason: they did it because they trusted Jesus.

They truly trusted Jesus.

You see, by this time, they'd been with Him long enough. They'd seen enough of His power. They'd watched enough amazing things happen at just the command of His word or the touch of His hand. They'd witnessed enough to know that even though it may seem strange or counter-cultural or even dangerous, if Jesus was involved in it, somehow it was going to work out.

You see, they remembered that time three years or so before, when, after a long and utterly worthless night of fishing, Jesus told them to try again: to let down their nets again, even though they were tired and everyone knew it was the wrong time of day to fish. He told them to give it one more shot, and they did. And they caught so many fish that their nets started to break.¹

They remembered that.

They remembered how Jesus was able to tell not just wild, chaotic spirits within people, but even the wind and the waves of the sea what to do, and they did it!²

They remembered how Jesus caused food – lots of it – to appear miraculously, and, in fact, He did this on two separate occasions.³

When Jesus told them to go into town and borrow that donkey, even though they may have paused for a moment, they quickly remembered how Jesus had miraculously healed Peter's mother-in-law,⁴ and the man with leprosy,⁵ and the Roman centurion's servant,⁶ and that fellow who was born blind,⁷ and others – *lots* of others.

In fact, they remembered how Jesus even raised from the dead that widow's son up in the town of Nain.⁸

And they would never forget Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead.⁹ He just shouted into the tomb, "Lazarus, come out!" And he did! He just walked out, struggling a bit because he was still wrapped up in the cloths in which he'd been buried.

You see, what the disciples had come to understand was that Jesus was just the kind of guy for whom things just always worked out.

¹ Luke 5:1-11

² Mark 1:23-28; Matthew 8:23-27

³ Matthew 14:15-21, 15:32-39

⁴ Mark 1:30-31

⁵ Mark 1:40-45

When Jesus was around, good stuff just happened. He was someone who could be counted on.

Even in *hard* or *strange* situations, even in *dangerous* situations, even in situations that *seemed* humanly *impossible*: if *Jesus* was *there*, somehow things would turn out OK.

So in this moment, when Jesus said, "Go and borrow that donkey," it was their recollections of all these past moments and these past events – far more than these I mentioned – that pushed them on and that gave them confidence and that caused them to think, "Well, if Jesus did *that*, and *that*, and *that* – *yesterday* and last *week* and last *year* – then it only makes sense that He'll work this out *today*."

It was the *evidence* of Jesus' *ability* in days *past* that gave them the *peace* to trust Him for *today*.

And so, they did just as He said. And when they *did*, what happened happened, just as He said – and all was well.

At least for today, Palm Sunday.

Of course, later on the Friday of that same week, Jesus' undefeated record of things working out for Him would appear to be broken, and for a time, the disciples would become confused and disappointed and disillusioned.

But not yet, not today – not on Palm Sunday.

Everything they'd seen in Jesus; everything they'd believed about Jesus; everything that had caused them to trust Jesus completely: all of it gave them the peace to do whatever He asked, knowing it would work out in the end.

That's why they did as He asked about the donkey; Jesus had proven Himself trustworthy. And when you can trust a person: well, that gives you the confidence and peace to do just about anything they ask.

And the very same is true today.

When you *don't* trust someone, that's when you want assurances and contracts and consideration and prenuptial agreements, right?

Because deep down, you wonder if they'll really do what they'll say they'll do.

But when we trust someone, when someone has a proven track record with us, well, that's a different thing.

We don't need any of that with Jesus, because we can see from all His past interactions with people (people of Scripture, people we know today, people sitting right here with us), we can *know* – we can *trust* – that Jesus will do what He says He'll do.

So, we can trust Him with our lives – with our decisions.

We can trust Him in what He tells us to do.

⁶ Matthew 8:5-13

⁷ John 9

⁸ Luke 7:11-18

⁹ John 11:1-46

Based on all we've seen Him do in days and lives past, we can trust that He'll do right by us.

And that means we can live, doing as He asks of us, in utter peace.

That sort of peace is available to us — every one of us — today, if we'll just accept and trust in all that Jesus has already done.

He's not about to lead us into trouble or error.

He'll lead us only into the best lives we can live — for His glory.

If we'll trust Him for that, we'll live lives of peace.

Are you trusting Him like that?

As you follow Him day by day, do you keep in mind all He's already done? All the ways He's already been trustworthy and faithful?

That's the way to live a life of peace following Jesus: reciting over and over again the ways He's *already provided* and *helped* and *healed* and *led* and *comforted*.

The evidence of yesterday is where peace for tomorrow comes from.

What is Jesus asking of you today?

What donkey is He asking you to borrow?

Whatever it is, you can, with total peace in your heart, say, "Sure, Jesus, I'll do that. I'll go there. I'll be

that. I'll give that. I'll attempt that. I'll trust you in this, because I remember all you've already done."

As we come to the Lord's Table, maybe God's Spirit is already speaking to you about some — let's call it a "donkey situation" — matter in your life about which you have not had peace. Will you trust Jesus today for that peace to do as he asks?

Service of Holy Communion

Closing Song: *Trust and Obey*, vv. 1,3,4

Benediction:

You know, the disciples entered the town and took the donkey: not because it was comfortable or easy, but because they trusted the One Who asked them to do it. They trusted Jesus that much, and He gave them peace.

The ironic thing, though, is that Jesus rode that very donkey into Jerusalem: not because it was comfortable or easy, but because He trusted the One who asked Him to do it. He put Himself in that position because He trusted God His Father that much, and He gave Jesus peace.

No matter what He asks of us today, let us trust and follow our Lord with complete peace.