

## Matthew 21:1-11

Did anyone take a break from all the football on Thursday to watch the National Dog Show on NBC? I didn't either. Even so, it is a really big event. And it's been going strong for well over one hundred years. These dogs, they can really put on a show. They're very different in this way from donkeys. I've never heard of a donkey show. Who'd want to watch that? Unless, maybe, for comical relief. Watching people trying to maneuver their donkeys around a course over bars, and through hoops, could be hilarious because, of course, donkeys are incredibly stubborn. That's even one definition for donkey in the dictionary: "stubborn...obstinate."

It might make us wonder why Jesus didn't choose a horse instead. Horses have class. They're majestic animals. There's no shame in riding a horse. But a donkey? And yet here it is in our text. Jesus sends two of His disciples to fetch a donkey for Him. This is going to be a big event. Multitudes will gather. And Jesus selects a stubborn, obstinate donkey on which to ride. What is He thinking?

We could ask the same question for our time. Why is it that still today Jesus rides on a donkey? And the donkey of which I speak is Holy Scripture. When we hear the truth of God – His holy words to us – that prophecy in Zechariah jumps off the page: "*Behold, your King is coming to you!*" Yes, this was pointing to Palm Sunday when Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. But these words remain in the present tense for us: "*Your King is coming to you...today!*"

Jesus promises that He is always on the donkey of the Word of God. That donkey is where He is to be found, and nowhere else. When He entered Jerusalem, only those people who gathered around the donkey gathered around Jesus. Today also. We should never look for Jesus except where He promises to be for us with His gifts: in His Word and in His Sacraments, which are the visible Word.

So God's Word is a donkey. Which is to say it's stubborn and obstinate. Really? Yes! This is Advent, and the theme for this season in the Church Year is repentance. God's Word is stubbornly insistent on this. Unless we repent of our sinful ways and have a change of mind, the wrath of God remains upon us. How dare we think that we can embrace Jesus while embracing our sins. No! Let him who wants to continue in sin go his own way. But let him who wants to be a Christian repent.

Am I being stubborn here? Yes. But only because Scripture is stubborn in this. It's a donkey when it proclaims the Law.

And thank God that Scripture is a donkey in proclaiming the Gospel. Have you ever been labeled as being stubborn and unyielding because you cling to the truth that Jesus is the one and only way to heaven? If so, good for you because you're standing with Scripture on this. If we think God's Word is a donkey regarding the Law, it's much more of a donkey with the Gospel. "*There is salvation in no one else (except Jesus Christ!)*" it loudly sounds forth. "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life,*" says Jesus, "*no one comes to the Father except through Me.*" And He does not back down from this truth. Not ever.

In fact, this Gospel truth is why our worship services are so repetitive. You know how donkeys can bray over and over and over. And it sounds so stupid. “Hee-haw!” is the sound the donkey makes.

This is exactly how the Gospel sounds to those who are of the world. “It’s stupid and foolish,” they say. Here’s how the apostle puts it, “*The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.*”

But not to you. You have a deep love for the hee-hawing of the donkey. Because, as the apostle says, “*The word of the cross...to us who are being saved is the power of God.*”

So listen now to the donkey braying to you. Jesus rode into Jerusalem to suffer and die on a cross for you, my friend. And this is the best thing anyone ever did for you. He carried your sins to His cross. He was punished for them in your place. You are forgiven.

Now I want you to consider something. The reason you are to look for Jesus only on the donkey of His Word and Sacraments is that any other donkey is a lie. Some look to their feelings; to what their heart tells them. But God’s Word is the true donkey that carries Christ. And it brays forth that you are forgiven by God no matter how you feel. It says that your baptism declares that you are always God’s forgiven child. It says that the Lord’s Supper always give you the true Jesus who died for you.

So whether you leave the altar today feeling forgiven, or not, it doesn’t matter. You are forgiven. Scripture says so. Even if you feel in your heart that God has something against you, turn away from that lying donkey. The donkey of Scripture brays forth that God is at peace with you. Jesus made this happen by His death on the cross for you.

Now my friends, you’ve heard the hee-hawing of the donkey again today. Yes, it is repetitive. You hear the same word of the cross for you every time you come here. But it’s the sound the donkey loves to make, and it’s the only sound that gives you the true Jesus, and with Him, forgiveness, life, and salvation. Those who are of the world may laugh at the hee-haws the donkey makes. They may despise the word of the cross and ridicule the donkey itself. Remember that the world is perishing. But you are called out of the world. So listen, and keep listening to the donkey. “*Behold, your King is coming to you riding on a donkey.*” Amen.