

I doubt very much that the multitude of disciples whom we see welcoming Jesus here in our text are battling the same frigid weather that we are today. Our text takes place in the Spring of the year. Here we are in early December, but it feels more like the dead of Winter.

We're told that all of these disciples are spreading their cloaks in the road. I don't think that any of us would be so willing to part with our cloak today. It would be quite a sacrifice for us to shed our outer garment and lay it down before Jesus.

Now, this was done throughout those days as a way of showing honor to a king. A cloak symbolizes protection, protection against the elements. It provides warmth and even shelter. To lay your cloak down before one who is a king, therefore, is to give of yourself to your king. And even this: to say, by this sacrifice, that your king is he who provides for you the protection and shelter that you need.

I don't think Jesus wants your coat. Please do not put it in the offering plate this morning. In fact, it's the other way around. Jesus blesses you with your cloak. It already belongs to Him, as does everything that you have. We can say, therefore, that your cloak, along with all you have, is borrowed; borrowed from Jesus.

Now, I wonder if you caught it earlier when I read our text. Maybe you thought my eyes were a bit blurry in speaking of the donkey's colt in this way: "*The Lord of it has need.*" "Wait," you were thinking, "can't you see straight? It reads, '*The Lord has need of it.*'" Actually, the Greek can be read either way: "The Lord has need of the colt," or "The Lord of the colt has need."

Jesus borrows this colt. He has need of it to ride into Jerusalem. Yet it is also true that the colt already belongs to Jesus. He is the Lord of all things including the colt.

I remember well the day when I received my first call. It was during the call service at the seminary. The pastor who preached the sermon for that service made it very clear to us, the students of my class, that we were nothing but jackasses. He used this text for his sermon. We, the seminary students who were about to receive calls into the Office of the Holy Ministry, were the donkeys, the colts upon which Jesus rides to His people. "The Lord has need of you," he told us. However, he could also have said, "The Lord of you has need." "You're just donkeys, yes, jackasses." He used that word. "Never forget this," he told us. "But you are Jesus' jackasses. Never forget that."

The people were not laying down their cloaks before the donkey on that day in Jerusalem, even though the only feet that walked on all their cloaks were the feet of the donkey, and not of Jesus. No one came out that day because of the donkey. It was Jesus who brought them out. It was Jesus before whom they spread their cloaks in the road. And it is Jesus I hope who brought you here today.

Now, if you believe what that pastor told us at our call service that day, that your pastor, no matter what you call him – something nice, or otherwise – that he is the one Jesus uses to come riding to you because, and only because, your pastor is tasked with preaching the pure Word of God to you and delivering Christ to you in the Sacraments, then you will want to pay attention to this, to what this donkey says to you: Jesus does want, in fact He demands, your cloaks.

But not the cloak that keeps your body warm. The cloak you use to cover your sinfulness. That garment. Your show of piety. Your pretense. Pretending that you do not have any sins worth mentioning. And worse, worth confessing.

This is a cloak that we all like to wear. Especially when others are watching us. Get rid of it. Lay it down before Jesus right here and now. Shed that ugly garment. It will only serve to keep Jesus from coming to you.

And here's why. Because Jesus comes riding to you with a new garment for you. A cloak that He gives to you in your baptism. It's the cloak He purchased for you on the cross by His bloody death. In fact, this cloak with which He covers you is drenched with His blood. Because only His blood can cleanse your sins. And it does. It doesn't hide your sins. It is forgiveness for your sins.

But if you or I refuse to remove the cloak we use to cover up our sins, to hide them from others, from God, and even from ourselves, what use do we have for the cloak Jesus gives to us in our baptism?

And so, do what we see His disciples doing in our text. Remove your cloak and lay it down before Jesus. Let the dirty feet of the donkey walk all over it. You will not need it any more. Jesus gives you a new garment. It is not a garment that you only borrow from Him. It is your garment. Your cloak. It is yours forever.

Now, pay attention to the Pharisees in our text. They oppose Jesus and they oppose His disciples. You also have such opposition against you. The devil is opposed to you. And he is in your ear this morning telling you to stop listening to this jackass in the pulpit. "Keep your old garment," he tells you, "That donkey up there is full of it! You are not a bad person. You do not have any sins worth confessing. Your old cloak is a good one."

No, it's not! You need Jesus. You need His forgiveness. And His forgiveness you have. You are all forgiven. Leave your old cloak here at His Table of Grace. Leave your sinful ways behind. Jesus is your covering from now on. Amen.