

**Luke 19:29-40**

There are a couple of definitions for “donkey” in the dictionary. One describes an animal domesticated for work. The other describes a stupid, foolish, and obstinate person. Some would say that Jesus rode on one of those donkeys on Palm Sunday, and He rides on the other one today. And they may be right. But only half-right. The donkey Christ rides on today is not just the person who proclaims God’s Word truthfully, but the very Word of God itself.

Jesus’ disciples may have wanted to ask Him why He wanted a donkey in the first place. Why not just walk? Why go to all the fuss of finding and procuring a donkey? The same questions are asked today. God can do what He wants—why would He bind Himself to the spoken Word and Sacraments? Why wouldn’t He simply come directly into my heart without all the fuss of getting baptized and going to church to hear the Word and receive the Lord’s Supper?

Besides, donkeys are rather obstinate and stubborn. It would have been much easier for everyone had He left the donkey behind on Palm Sunday; and it would be a whole lot easier for us if we could remove Jesus from His donkey today. And truthfully, many do just that. A young man recently told me, “I have Jesus in my heart; I don’t need to go to church to have Jesus.” The same bold statements were made in Martin Luther’s day, but Luther said that such talk is “of the devil!”

Jesus does not come to His people apart from His donkey. We are not to look for Jesus except on the donkey of His Word and Sacraments. And that’s not the easiest thing for us to believe, because for one thing as was said, donkeys can be defined as “stupid, foolish, and obstinate.” And the Word of God is exactly that in the eyes of many. God’s Word is “foolishness to those who are perishing,” 1 Corinthians 1 tells us. It is fool-hearty to think that God would allow Himself to be crucified; and that He would go through with this simply to rescue sinful mankind.

But that is precisely what the Scriptures teach! Even though you and I have rejected God, He dies for us so that we may have eternal life. And this life is found only in Jesus Christ. The Bible is downright obstinate about this. Obstinate means, “unreasonably determined... not yielding to reason... stubborn.” Do you realize how stubborn the Scriptures are? They are determined, even in the face of human reason, to declare that Jesus Christ is the one and only way to heaven. How utterly unreasonable! Such talk is purely offensive to the world. There is a vast array of religions out there. People of all races, colors, and cultures are quite sincere in what they believe. And here is the Christian Faith declaring, in no uncertain terms, that faith in Jesus Christ alone is what saves; to believe anything else is to perish!

No wonder God’s Word is a “donkey.” When it comes to life and salvation, it is completely determined and unyielding. But isn’t that why Jesus chose to ride on a donkey? Because the truth of God is not what every person thinks it is. God’s truth is that Christ died for sinners. God’s truth is that there is salvation in no other name than Jesus Christ alone. God’s truth is not “up for grabs.” It was nailed with certainty to a cross, and rose from the dead with power, and gives life to you now in your baptism.

We can thank God that Jesus chose a donkey to come to His people on. Our hearts are full of sin and deceit, but the donkey of God's Word is reliable and certain—and though we put up a fuss, yet, because it is so stubborn and sure of itself—on that unyielding donkey Christ breaks through the doors of our sin-filled hearts to give us life and salvation.

Now there are some who object to Christ's donkey because it is, after all, a little boring. It was that way on Palm Sunday. There was a festive celebration going on, but it wasn't because of the donkey. Donkeys are slow, predictable, and not very exciting. A recent visitor to our church service told me later that our services are boring. "At my church," she said, "we never know what's going to happen next, or be said each week. My church is exciting." But such is the way it is for a congregation that puts faithfulness to God's Word as a higher priority over excitement and entertainment.

Donkeys are rather predictable. They may not be as exciting as horses. Horses gallop and prance. Horse shows are quite common in some places. There are no donkey shows. A donkey will never win the Kentucky Derby. You pretty much know what you're going to get with a donkey. Perhaps that's why Jesus chooses to come to us today on the donkey of God's Word. He is not here to entertain you. He is here to forgive you. Christ is not interested in showing off for you. He is here to serve you; to give you the same wonderful gifts week, after week, after week.

This does not mean that church can't be a festive occasion. It can and should be. Just as the people rejoiced as Christ came to them on the donkey on Palm Sunday, so our praises, singing, and demeanor can be joyful and uplifting. But whether you're in a good mood today, or a bad one—Christ comes to you just the same. Whether you feel uplifted or not—Jesus declares that you are forgiven. Whether you come up to the altar with a smile or a frown—Christ's body and blood is for you, and He gives you life and salvation here no matter how your face may look.

That's the way it is with the donkey of God's Word—it gives us the same Jesus week after week, no matter how we feel in our heart. It gives us the joy of knowing that our sins are forgiven, even if we don't feel forgiven. We can thank God that Jesus chose a donkey to come to His people on, because God wants you to know and believe—day after day, week after week—that He is reliable and predictable. You know what you have with the Lord. His mercy for you does not change. His word of peace to you is always the same.

The Palm Sunday Gospel tells us that Christ does not come to us on a stallion dressed for battle, but that He comes to you gently and peacefully. He came on a donkey to die for you, and He comes on a donkey now to give you, again and again, the life which knows no end.

Years ago a donkey came to Jerusalem. Today a donkey comes to Augusta. And that is reason for us to rejoice, because where the donkey is, there is Christ. He is here for you, friend, so that you can go to work Monday morning knowing that God is at peace with you; so that you can go into your classroom confident that your sins are forgiven. Jesus is here on His donkey to help you as you struggle with your sorrows. He is here to take on your troubles for you. Jesus comes on His donkey for you so that He may go with you each day in your life. Amen.

