

Mark 11:1-10

Two-thousand years before there ever was an Occupy Wall Street, or an Occupy Oakland, or an Occupy St. Louis, there was an Occupy Jerusalem rally. It began when Jesus climbed up on a donkey to ride into the holy city. Just like today's crowds, the Occupy Jerusalem crowd pretty much made a royal mess. They littered the ground, not with feces, but with palm branches. And just like today, the Occupy Jerusalem crowd took up a chant to let their demands be made known. "Hosanna!" they cried over and over, "Hosanna!" 'Save us now' they were demanding.

Just like today's occupiers, the Jerusalem crowd was wanting something for nothing. They were not crying about their student loans. Their demands were not that the government should save them from having to pay back the money they owed. The Jerusalem occupiers wanted Jesus to save them from their enemies. Most of them were thinking that their biggest and baddest enemy was Rome. But Jesus knew better. He was not preparing to defeat Pontius Pilate and Caesar. He was preparing to destroy the power of the devil. Jesus would answer their cries. He would give these occupiers something for nothing. He would travel to the cross--a place not far from where the occupiers were staging their rally--and defeat there the enemies of sin, death, and Satan.

Today's occupiers could learn a lesson from the Occupy Jerusalem crowd. If today's occupiers want something for nothing, they should move their butts off their campsites and place them next to yours on the church pew. It is not the business of the government to give its citizens something for nothing. But it is God's business. The world is built with sweat and hard work, but the church is built by grace. Rather than throw a pity-party in downtown St. Louis, those occupiers should come here to Augusta and God, through the preaching of His Word, will give them, free of charge, the same thing He gives to each one of you--His grace and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Las Vegas may soon start taking bets on just how long the occupy mobs will keep it going around the country. But they will never outlast the church. Ever since Jesus ascended on high, His saints have been occupying buildings, huts, homes, and wherever they can find a place to worship, crying out with one voice: "Hosanna! Save us now! Hosanna! Come, Lord Jesus...Come to us and deliver us!"

During Advent our cry is magnified as we focus our attention upon our Lord's promise that He will soon come and take His church home with Him. But that isn't good enough. We love and hold on to that promise, but we want more now. We want Jesus to come to us now. As loud as the occupy mobs are around the country, we in the church should be even louder. They only want material things. We want Jesus.

That's why you're here. You do not pitch tents and camp out here in church, but every Sunday like clock-work you become the Occupy Christ Lutheran Church crowd, and in this you are no different from the Jerusalem crowd in our text. Just as Jesus came to them that day, so He comes to you today. But He comes, both then and now, riding only on a donkey. The only place where the people in Jerusalem could find Jesus as He was coming to them, was on the donkey. And that is the only place we will find Him today. And that donkey is His Holy Word.

If you and I want Jesus, we will not find Him while out hiking through the woods. We will not find Him in our thoughts, or even in our hearts. We will find Jesus where He is at work finding us--seated squarely on the donkey of His Word. And when that Word is attached to water in Holy Baptism, Jesus is there. When that Word is joined to bread and wine on the altar, Jesus is there. And where Jesus is, there is forgiveness, life, and salvation. Where Jesus is, there heaven and earth meet--for

there, in Him, His saints above and His saints on earth are joined together into one communion. Where Jesus is, there is peace with God. Where Jesus is, there sin, and death, and hell must give way, for by His death and resurrection He has become their conqueror.

And we who have tasted Christ in our baptism; we who have known His mercy and love; we, more than anyone, should be the loudest occupy mob in the country, crying out for more of Him at the top of our lungs. You should be demanding, not less of Jesus, but more of Him. Not less time in Sunday School and Bible Class, but more. Not less Holy Communion, but more. Not shorter worship services--not if we truly believe Jesus comes to us in the hearing of His Word and the eating and drinking of the Holy Sacrament.

But too often you and I become like all the occupy mobs around the country wanting, not more of Jesus, but more things. More money, more time for ourselves, more of what our flesh desires. And when we want more things, we will want less of Jesus. Less time in His Word, less Holy Communion, less time in His House where His truth is proclaimed and His gifts are given. When we strive for more things, we will turn away from the donkey. And when we turn away from the donkey, we turn away from Jesus.

But friend, Jesus does not turn away from you. He did not turn away from the cross which was in His path, because He was going there for you. And as He hung on that cross, His voice cried at the top of His lungs--louder than all the occupy mobs put together--"My God...why hast Thou forsaken Me!" Jesus went to hell for you. On the cross He suffered the agony that you and I deserve. His Father turned away from Him.

And that's why, today, Jesus gives you something for nothing. Not because it's free, but because He paid the price for you. He bore the punishment of your sins. He suffered in your place. He earned for you life and salvation--a place in heaven--and this He gives to you for nothing, because there is nothing you can do to get it...it is a gift given to you by grace. And this gift, this something for nothing, is given where the donkey is--where Jesus comes to us in His Word and Sacraments.

The donkey is here today, and so Jesus is here. He comes to you today for one reason. Not to give you a guilty heart--an inner guilt over all the times we have turned away from Him. No, Jesus comes to forgive you; to remove the burden of your guilt; to say to each of you, 'I bore your sin. Be at peace. I forgive you.' This gift He loves giving most of all. And He loves giving it to sinners like us who do not deserve it. This forgiveness is not what the occupy mobs out there are wanting. They want things, not Jesus, not forgiveness. But it's what you need, and it's yours now, free of charge. Every time you come here where Jesus is on His donkey for you, He gives you this gift.

One day He will not be on His donkey. One day we will see Him coming in the clouds of glory, and for that day we cry with expectation. But until He comes on the clouds, He keeps coming to you now on His donkey. He keeps coming with His gifts, with His pardon and mercy. So that when He comes in glory you will not turn away in fear, but you will rejoice that your "Hosanna's" have been answered. "Come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.