

## Luke 19:28-40

Had this story taken place in our day, there may have been a few changes involved. The owners may have called 911 to report that their donkey was being stolen. Or, upon approaching the two disciples, they may have asked to see a driver's license and a valid credit card. They may have demanded that they sign a rental contract before taking the donkey. But as it is, the disciples encountered no such hindrances. They did as Jesus directed them, and the only piece of identification they needed were the words, "*The Lord has need of it.*"

We may pass over these words without much thought, but consider what they mean. The God of heaven and earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords needed to borrow a donkey! The Son of God had emptied Himself so completely that in order to ride into the Holy City where He would be condemned to die, He had to ask to borrow an animal that He had created.

But I suppose we should not be all that surprised. He borrowed the womb of the Virgin Mary to enter into this world. He borrowed a cross upon which to die. And He borrowed a rich man's tomb to be buried in. From start to finish, Jesus was a borrower. And it doesn't end there. He still borrows today. He borrows the bread and wine you provide to come riding to you in the Sacrament. He borrows the time you give Him to serve both you and your neighbor with it. He borrows your offerings to do the work of God through them. None of these things does He demand, but through all of these things, when Jesus borrows them, we are the ones who are blessed.

It did not happen this way, but suppose the owners of the donkey had said, "No!" Suppose they had turned the two disciples away refusing their request. It's not that a different donkey couldn't have been acquired. But Jesus directed them to this donkey. He did not instruct His disciples to search the village for any old donkey. He told them to bring this one to Him. His words were clear, "*The Lord has need of it.*"

And so for you. As two disciples brought the donkey to Jesus, so your two parents brought you to Him through Holy Baptism. He wanted you. He directs Christian fathers and mothers--your father and mother--as He directed His two disciples, that you are the one He wants. These words, therefore, could be applied to each one of you, "The Lord has need of you."

That donkey was nothing special. There was nothing about it which caused it to stand out from all other donkeys. It was just a donkey. If you and I have become a little proud of ourselves over time...perhaps because of who we are before God. We are His children, members of His church. That makes us something special. A cut above everyone else...remember this story in the Bible. You and I are nothing but jackasses. We're not special donkeys in our own right. We were just donkeys tied up, by Satan's rope, when Jesus called us. He did not choose us because He saw something good, some potential within us. He chose you and me to be His donkeys purely out of mercy.

So Jesus borrowed that donkey. What a contrast! A lowly, smelly, filthy donkey with the holy, spotless Son of God sitting on it. And yet no one looked at that donkey with shame. Instead, that donkey was honored because of Jesus. That donkey became special, became the talk of the town in a good way, became useful to God, and has been spoken of by the church whenever this story has been read. And this is also true of you. Although lowly and filthy with your sin, because Jesus came to you in your baptism, He who sits on you, who covers you, and lives in you makes you special before God. All the angels in heaven know your name. They rejoice over you, and speak of you with joy for this

reason--because Jesus has need of you, because He borrows you for His purposes. He chooses to cover you with His holiness so that you are a beautiful donkey before God, beautiful in every way.

Now what do you suppose Jesus would have done had the donkey in the story become stubborn? Had it suddenly stopped in its tracks? Had it refused to let Jesus ride it anymore? We should ponder this thought because very often we become such a donkey. The Lord has need of us, but we respond, "Not me, find someone else," or, "Not today, I'm too busy." The Lord has need of your time. He wants to borrow it so He can bless you in many ways, and others through you. But we are selfish with our time. We're often too busy on Sundays to learn and hear His Word, too busy through the week to let Jesus borrow even fifteen minutes so He can bless us as we read His Word. He wants to borrow your talents and resources, but we're selfish with these too. We have become donkeys that the Lord has need of, who stop walking where He leads us, who even try to throw Him off our back so we are free to live how we want.

Because of this, because we who became special donkeys useful to God because of Jesus, often live as selfish, stubborn donkeys, Jesus, out of mercy, became a borrower once again. In the Garden of Gethsemane, at the court of Pilate, on a hill outside of Jerusalem He borrowed a cross upon which to die. It can be said of that cross, "*The Lord has need of it.*" Why? To die for you and me. To suffer for His selfish donkeys. To take the punishment that we stubborn donkeys deserve. He hung on the cross, and on that cross He rode into hell. He went there out of love for you, to take your place, to win for you a place in heaven.

And now, friend, God forgives you. Jesus did all this for you, and God forgives your selfishness and stubbornness. He is not angry at you for often failing to be useful to Him. His mercy is greater than His anger. He forgives you, and He helps you. He helps you to live as useful donkeys, as donkeys who carry Christ to others because Christ lives in you.

And so today as I look out over this sanctuary--the feeding trough for Jesus' donkeys--I see lowly donkeys, yes...sinful donkeys, yes...but even more, I see, and I thank God for, donkeys who are covered with Christ, donkeys who carry Christ, donkeys who are forgiven in Christ. Amen.