

The Lord Needs It

A Palm Sunday Sermon Based on Luke 19:29-44

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A story is told that during World War II, a church building in France was destroyed by bombings.ⁱ The people of the church were surprised to find after the bombing that their statue of Jesus was still standing except that his outstretched arms were missing. Instead of replacing the lost arms, the leaders of the church decided that it would be a great message for everyone to have a plaque at the base of the statue with words saying, “Christ has no hands but ours.” Of course this story has had different versions that have been circulating all around the world. While there has been a matter of debate over the authenticity of the story, the message it conveys is without any doubt worthwhile. Christians are called to be Christ’s presence in our world today. God is all-powerful, right? Jesus was able to do all things including healing the sick, and casting out demons, right? Then why would God need us to be his hands and feet? What we know from scripture is that Jesus himself chooses to use his disciples in order for him to accomplish his mission on this earth. Our selected scripture is a witness to that fact.

Jesus on his way to Jerusalem sent two of his disciples to an unknown village ahead of them to look for an unknown colt from an unknown person’s property. And upon finding it, they have to untie it and bring it to him so he could ride on it to Jerusalem. It’s rather interesting to note that Jesus’ disciples were very obedient here and that they went to do exactly what Jesus had ask them without questioning Jesus. And the only verification Jesus sent along with them was “the Lord needs it.” How can you go to someone’s property and think that they will understand who this Lord was? In many ways it sounds like a set up right? “The Lord needs it” sounds more or less like a secret code between Jesus and this owner. Because the owner when he heard from the disciples that “the Lord needs it,” willingly lends his animal without any further questions.

But what we need to know to understand this scripture is that the Greek word used here for both “Lord” and “owner” is the same. So the phrase “the Lord needs it” can also mean, “the owner needs it.”ⁱⁱ In this sense the owner of the colt understands clearly that even though he is the owner or lord of the animal, he recognizes that Jesus’ lordship outdoes his ownership. I think such realization is something that caused not only the owner to willingly loan his animal, but also for the disciples to so willingly do what Jesus asked of them and to cast their cloaks on top of the animal for Jesus to ride on it. Furthermore, this encouraged the crowd to keep spreading their cloaks on the road for Jesus to walk on, which was followed by loud voices of praise and joy that disrupted the neighborhood of Jerusalem. Truthfully, we can’t deny the fact that maybe the courage demonstrated by the disciples and the crowd that surrounded Jesus must have originated from the misperception that maybe this is the moment when Jesus is going to destroy the oppressive Roman Empire and finally deliver them. But what I’m more interested in here is their willingness to do and follow Jesus instructions because they know that the Lord needs it. So the question then is, “What is it that the Lord needs from each and everyone of us in

order to accomplish God's mission in this world?" What is the thing God has put in our lives that we are called to give or do something with? We do or give because whatever we have we know does not belong to us, it belongs to the Lord, and the Lord needs it.

I believe we all as individuals know what the Lord needs from us, or maybe not. For some of us, maybe the Lord needs our eyes to really see our brothers and sisters who are rejected, marginalized and oppressed mainly because of their skin color, gender, religion, social status or even political beliefs. For some of us maybe the Lord needs our love and compassion to show ourselves and those around us people who are unloved, lonely and going through crisis after crisis that need our support. For some of us maybe the Lord need our listening hearts to really listen to those whose voices have been silenced for so long and to be courageous enough to stand up and lift up your voices on behalf of those whose right and justice has been denied for so long. Maybe for some of us the Lord need our precious time to set aside out of our busy schedules to look around us and notice what gifts and resources we have that God can use to help those who are in desperate need. Or even for some of us who are blessed financially maybe the Lord needs our generosity and willingness to donate to a good cause that would help eradicate poverty and hunger in our community and our world. All this is to say, the Lord needs each and every one of us to recognize the things we can do that "make for peace" both within our community and our world today.

As Christians and as human beings, often times we are hesitant to give what we have for God's service mainly because we are unsure about trusting each other. I mean how would you react if you found someone unlocking your car because he or she said 'the Lord needed it'? I think you and I would not only be angry with that person, but would even have them charged with trespass or burglary especially when there seems to be no valid reason for them doing this. You see, our human tendency is to believe that whatever we have is ours, we deserve it, and how dare anyone take it. As Christian we forget all that we have and all that we are belongs to God, and we don't deserve any of it. When we remember that, we are called to trust because we have already been entrusted with something. God has entrusted us with our time, talent, and resources. We have to trust God will do something good with it. And we have to trust others, because the Kingdom of God will not come just through one person but through all of us working together.

Sometimes also we don't give of our time, resources and talent because we don't think we are good enough, and we feel lost in knowing what God wants us to do. It is easy to look at other people and think they are more talented, more gifted, richer, more capable, have more free time. Someone else, anyone else seems better than us. Yet God chooses all of us. God chose the motley crew of disciples, and someone else's donkey to do his work. And God chooses our hands, our feet, and our time to do the work of the Kingdom. And now you are thinking, okay, even if I was willing I don't know what to do. I can understand that. It is often hard to know what God wants us to do. Well the key is to listen. Never would the disciples have imagined God would need them to get a donkey and ask them to lay down their cloaks. You see they had to listen. Sometimes we get so caught up in our own life that we don't have our ears open to the Lord's leading, and we don't have our eyes open to those who are suffering. God can use you, all of you, are you willing to follow?

The final and probably most significant thing that blocks us from following God's leading these days is we worry about our time. We are all busy people and limited by the 24 hours in the day and our own energy levels. We think how can I do one more thing? Serving the Lord seems like just one more thing to add to our schedules. Yet God created us for service. If we deny that, if we overlook that and just see it as something to put in our schedule, we deny whom God created us to be, and we will continue to feel worn out and unfulfilled. When we put the values of the kingdom first we might be surprised with what time God makes for us.

Friends, as we enter into this holy week we need to remember that we not only acknowledge the pain and suffering Jesus endured, but also the immense heartache, pain and brutality that continue to ravage our world today, especially the impact of the pandemic and the political and racial division and hate we continue to witness in our country. As the people who claim Christ as our Savior we need to speak up, and show up, because God chooses us. God did not choose "the stones to scream and shout out", God chooses us and needs us. We have what it takes; God has given it to us. Yes, we are not perfect, yes it takes trust, and yes it takes time. Yet, we follow Jesus Christ through this lonely road because we will know redemption on the other side. Hallelujah! Amen.

ⁱ "Christ has No Hands but Ours." *Pitterle Postings*, December 31, 2009,

<http://pitterlepostings.blogspot.com/2009/12/christ-has-no-hands-but-ours.html>.

ⁱⁱ David, D. Mark. "A Man on a Colt with No Name." *Left Behind and Loving It*, April 7, 2019,

<https://leftbehindandlovingit.blogspot.com/2016/03/a-man-on-colt-with-no-name.html>.