

Donkey Fetchers

Scripture: Mark 11:1 – 11

John 11:45 – 57

Palm Sunday 4/5/20

I have been ask many times in my life to fetch something. My Dad would often ask me to fetch something like a tool, a drink, or a jacket. My wife often asks me to fetch something like a drink, something from the garage, or a sweater. And I often have asked my children to fetch something for me like a tool, a drink, or some ice cream. Boy, as I wrote this part of the message today, it seems that I have spent a lot of my life fetching a drink or a coat!

I have been a fetcher, how about you?

But I have never been a fetcher like the two disciples did on the first Palm Sunday! I have never been told to fetch a donkey!

Listen again to Mark 11:1 – 2 – *‘Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you and immediately as you enter the village, you will find tied there a donkey that has never been ridden.’*

The phrase ‘donkey fetcher’ is part of the vocabulary of the Palm Sunday story. Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly upon a donkey that the two disciples fetched for Jesus. In the perspective of the disciples, they are donkey fetchers. Are you?

In our scripture reading from Mark’s Gospel, there is considerable discussion about where to find the donkey for Jesus, how to untie it, and what to do if someone questions them in the process. Jesus tells them many details about the donkey fetching.

Jesus tells the two disciples what to say if anyone ask them what they are doing. Jesus tells them to say – *The Lord has need of the donkey and he will send the donkey back when done.* That is a LOT of detail for the donkey fetchers!

What an odd duty for the disciples to carry out that day. I doubt the disciples woke up that morning thinking – ‘I wonder what we will be doing today? I bet you we will be going ahead into an unknown village and borrowing a donkey from a stranger for our Lord.’

They were donkey fetchers that day! In their obedience to Jesus, they found that they were part of the amazing story of Palm Sunday. They were part of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The donkey they fetched for Jesus is an essential part of the story. If the disciples had balked at their instructions, the story would have been significantly different. If the disciples refused to be donkey fetchers, the entry would not have taken place. If the disciples passed this request from Jesus on, Christ would not have entered Jerusalem.

So today I am here to ask you this – What donkey fetching is the Lord calling you to do? What strange task are you to do today? What unexpected duty are you to do today? What task in the service of Christ is facing you today?

Will you accept the challenge of going forward and following through even if you are not sure exactly what it means? Will you accept Jesus’ instructions to do that task before you even though you do not know what good will come of it?

In our second Gospel reading from the Gospel of John, we have others in Jerusalem who are not thinking of support Jesus, but are plotting against Jesus.

Caiaphas was the high priest the year Jesus entered Jerusalem and he was not a fan of Jesus. He considered Jesus a trouble maker, a nuisance, a false Messiah, and an evil prophet. Caiaphas and the religious leaders in the Holy Temple were taking a calculated risk concerning Jesus. If they did nothing about Jesus, he would start a revolution and further incite the Romans against the Jewish people. If they got rid of Jesus, there was a chance the movement led by Jesus would be stopped and things would return to normal.

In what Caiaphas considered ‘conventional wisdom’, he urged the leaders within the Temple to spare the nation by taking the life of one man. One man is not a loss considering what could happen to the nation! Ironically, this was exactly what God had in mind!

God always demonstrates the ability to redeem evil motives and actions for good. In the Old Testament, God turned Joseph's enslavement into an opportunity for salvation. God turned Esther's captivity into a chance for communal vindication.

And in Jesus case, God turns the vengeance of a small group into the redemption of the whole world!

Perhaps this explains why God does not always prevent the advance of sinful plans against us. God is the One who did not stop the evil intentions of the enemy, he is the One who has power to everything around for good.

Those that are against us do not know that their plans are still part of God's ultimate plan. Their worst intentions become part of the best intentions God had in mind all along.

When evil plans appear in advance in our lives and in the world, God calls each of us to remember the irony of the cross. What was designed to be a tool for death and humiliation has become for us a symbol of redemption and life!

Knowing God's redemptive power through Jesus Christ should cause us to laugh at the troubles that try to take us down. God uses whatever sends us spiraling downward to catapult us higher into God's victorious plan. Instead of shying away from weapons formed against us, we must rejoice with the knowledge that they will not prosper.

Let the words of those who seek our demise be turned into ironic phrases of triumph and truth.

As we move into Holy Week, the holiest week of the year, let us enter in to it with a sense of service and obedience. Let us look for the many ways in which God will gently call us to service in God's Kingdom. Are you ready to become a donkey fetcher? Are you ready to face adversity knowing that God's plan for each of us is to turn our troubles into victories for us?

Let us pray:

God of duties both great and small, thank you for the example of obedience by the disciples. Help us to become donkey fetchers this week and each day in our lives. Help us to do whatever that means in our lives.

And O God, help us in times of opposition to see the truth of your redemption. We thank you for working things out for our good.

AMEN.