**The Lord Needs Them**

**Matthew 21:1-9**

Palmarum – 03.27.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Palmarum, Palm Sunday, the day we remember Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem seated on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Today marks the beginning of Holy Week, the week we recount the events of our Lord’s Passion – His suffering. This week is highlighted especially with the disciples in the upper room and Christ’s instituting the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, but then it turns ugly – or beautiful – depending on how you view it. These are the cataclysmic events which God foretold would happen as His own Son fulfilled the entire Old Testament, winning forgiveness with His Passion – His suffering and death.

In our Gospel lesson, we read of Jesus sending two of His disciples to the village before them to bring back a donkey and her colt back to him. If questioned about what they are doing, they are to reply, “The Lord needs them.” At this response, the owner will send them at once.

Dear friends, how do you respond to the Lord’s requests of you? Do you do them at once? Do you hesitate? Do you ponder whether it is truly Christ’s demand of you, or simply a request which you are free to ignore? I would guess that it depends on whether you like the demand or not?

How about if it is not the Lord who makes the request, but one of those whom He sends? You know, like in our text? The Lord sent a couple of His disciples to go get the animals with these words, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once.”

When the Lord makes demands of us, how do we respond? When the Lord sends His disciples to do the task, how do we respond? Usually we do not do it “at once.” All too often when we do what He commands, we do it with grumbling. Some simply do not believe that the messenger was sent by God at all – or that it is the messenger’s own interpretation of what God said to do. So, they ignore the demand – they do not feel they need to do what is asked.

But what exactly is the need the Lord has which requires the use of these animals? Our text declares that it is to fulfill what was spoken of by the prophet Zechariah, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

That is indeed true, but what is it He needs them for? He needs them for His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. He does not come into Jerusalem as a conquering king with trumpet fanfare, riding in a chariot waving to the crowd. He comes into Jerusalem not even on full grown donkey, but on a foal, the colt of a donkey.

Why? Because He comes into Jerusalem in humility. He does not want to do anything except the will of His Father. The will of the Father is that He live His life in perfect obedience to the Father’s will, that He may be the perfect, sinless, holy Lamb of God.

Jesus has accomplished that to this day in which He rides into Jerusalem. He has come into the city to be the perfect and holy sacrificial Lamb, led to the slaughter without complaint. He has come to be the conqueror over sin and death. But to do so, He must give Himself as the sacrifice for all sinfulness.

The Lord needs them because He comes into Jerusalem on a beast of burden, pointing forward to the fact that He will be bear the burden of all sins.

Our Old Testament lesson from Zechariah is quoted only in part in our Gospel lesson, in the original we hear that our King is coming; righteous and having salvation is He --- humble and mounted on a donkey. Christ needs these animals to fulfill this prophecy – He is righteous and having salvation.

His righteousness is His perfection, sinlessness, and holiness. He did not count equality with God something to be grasped. Being God, He made Himself to be nothing. He is God in human flesh, the Creator in the form of one of His creatures – born in the likeness of men. Yet different! He is God enfleshed. He does not need an earthly royal entourage to declare His power, might, and glory. That happens on the cross! Displayed in incredible humility.

Jesus fulfills the prophecy of the Messiah’s entry into Jerusalem by His need for these lowly beasts. Messiah does not enter the holy city to set up a Messianic age of rule, overthrowing the Roman overlords and restoring prominence to the nation of Israel. That is not Messiah’s task! Yes, His rule will be from sea to sea, even to the very ends of the earth. In fact, every knee will bow to Him. But His is not a kingdom of earthly might – it is one of eternal glory – one of spoken peace.

His reign begins when He defeats the mortal enemies of all mankind – sin and death.

“The Lord ***NEEDS*** them!”

The Lord needs to do what He has come into His creation to do!

It is necessary that He take on His Passion.

Passion, what does that word mean? We have lost the original meaning of the word for in our understanding, passion would mean great desire.

But the word actually comes from the Latin word *passio.* It means to allow, or endure suffering. You also see the root of word ‘passive.’ To be passive in a particular action, is to be the one upon who the action if visited.

Christ’s passion is His suffering, but it suffering that He endures – it is suffering He allows to be visited upon Him. Think of the great “Passion Play” in Obermerggau, of even some others in the U.S. All depict this events of this coming week in the life of Christ – His innocent suffering, and ultimate death.

But we can also consider the word ‘passion’ in terms of a great desire. It is Christ’s greatest desire to do for you what you fail to do for yourself. Where you and I sinned, unwilling to do the will of God in our life, He was obedient to the Father’s will in all things. He was even obedient in things we were never asked to do.

“Son, go take on human flesh in the womb of Mary.” Yes Father, as you will.

:Son, resist all temptation in that human flesh.” He did so in His whole life, especially in the wilderness for 40 days, whenever people treated Him poorly, in the Garden of Gethsemane when Satan tempted to turn away from the cross.

“Son, as God in human flesh, your perfect life needs to be sacrificed unto death for the sins of all people.” It was His desire to do so, to endure His passion – His suffering at the hands of others as the perfect Lamb of God. He was led to the slaughter, sentenced by Pilate to be cursed – for cursed is everyone who is nailed to a tree – in our place, that we might not endure the wrath of God.

He did all this for His passion for His Passion (His willingness to endure suffering) was to redeem you, a lost and condemned person. His joy was to purchase you back from sin, death, and the power of the devil. But the cost was horrific! No price of money – no gold or silver – no platinum American Express which could cover the debt to be paid for you, me, and all mankind. Only the holy precious blood, and the innocent suffering and death of the God-man could pay the price.

So, for the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. He is the power and authority of God to make you His own.

It is our joy, to repent and come to Jesus in faith. While repentance is turning from sin, and turning to Christ for forgiveness, it ***is a*** turning from sin. We know the cost! We know the price of Christ’s Passion. So, in repentance, we desire to sin no more.

We do not just speak a word of repentance, hear a word of forgiveness, and return to doing the same old things (or not doing the things we ought to be doing) all over again. We beg that Jesus would forgive us and dwell within us, that we might no longer sin.

We needed the Lord to do what He did – and we need Him to do what He does.

The Lord has need of those simple, humble, things to bear the burden to carrying Him to us.

The Word of forgive carries Christ to our ailing ears.

Bread delivers to waiting mouths the very flesh of the Son of God, that we might eat of Him and be filled with His salvation.

Wine bears to our parched lips the blood of our Redeemer which brings us healing and life now, and forever.

The Lord needs them, for they are the means by which He has chosen to come to you to build you up in Him to life everlasting.

Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! Amen.