

Untie The Donkey

Lesson #36 Sept. 13, 2023

Matthew 21:1-3 When they had approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you. Right away you will find a donkey tied there, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you are to say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."
Sovereignty of God: Sent the disciples to the exact place for the exact donkey who was waiting for Him.

Interesting: Only Matthew mentions the mother donkey
Only Matthew mentions the prophecy of Zechariah
Mark & Luke add: No one has ever sat on the colt.

Jesus knew exactly where Little Donkey was.

The disciples didn't ask why, they simply obeyed and left to untie the donkey.

Note: Doesn't it seem odd that Jesus would walk ~80-90 miles from Galilee to Bethphage and then secure a donkey for the final 2 miles into Jerusalem? Jesus wasn't untying the donkey because his feet were tired. He was carefully planning His entry into Jerusalem by fulfilling prophecy.

Jesus' riding the donkey echoed the regal arrival in Zechariah's prophecy.

Matt. 21:4-5 This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. 'Behold, thy King comes unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" [Zech. 9:9 He prophesied this 550 years earlier.]

Every Jew would know Zechariah's messianic prophecy. That's why the crowds hailed Jesus as their king shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" [Matthew 21:9] In the ancient Biblical world, a leader rode on a horse if he was going to war and a donkey to signify peace. People seeing Jesus riding into the city on a donkey, understood what that meant...it was a sign of kingship and royalty.

Matt. 21:9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

God's Purpose For The Donkey

1. This little donkey, a colt, a never-used animal was prepared for a very special purpose in what would be the most important time of all eternity.
 - In this one colt, we see the evidence of God's faithfulness to His promises spanning thousands of years, assuring us of Christ's kingship as the Messiah.
 - Before this donkey was ever born, or even thought of, he was designed by God in His sovereign plan that this donkey would be in this place.
 - He existed for this very purpose. He was there for such a time as this.

Coincidence or Sovereignty of God?

In Esther 4:14, Mordecai was speaking of his niece's opportunity to save her people. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" He had an understanding of the way God works. She didn't just happen to be in that place. But God had put her into that place so that in His good time, He would use her for His purpose. Many things that seem to be coincidences, we should view instead as the sovereignty of God.

- Rahab lived in the city wall where she could let the spies down.
- David was bringing cheese to his brothers.
- The widow who fed Elijah was out gathering sticks.

To the untrained eye, these things would all seem like coincidences, but God had maneuvered each of these just like the donkey into just the right place, so that when he was ready to incorporate them into his plan, they would be ready to go.

Interesting Facts About The Donkey

1. He was an ordinary donkey, not even full-grown donkey.

Not sired by a famous king-carrying donkey. Not trained in royal stables for donkeys. He had never been ridden before. He had never carried anyone, let alone a king. He was an insignificant donkey.

Nobody took notice of the donkey whose potential was wasting because he was tied. Nobody believed that donkey could be useful, let alone carry the King of kings into Jerusalem.

2. Donkey needs to be UNTIED BEFORE he can be used. Most of us are like little donkey & are tied down by something that is limiting our service to the Lord.

- My possessions/materialism
- Roots of bitterness > anger, wrath, malice, clamor, slander
- Anxiety: stress > bound to a sense of unworthiness which leads to hopelessness
- Broken relationship > negative emotions > depression, doubt, despair, shame, fear, guilt
- Tied to burdens > past and present
- Tied to sins > past and present > Satan loves to remind me.
- Selfish with my time and energy; desire to follow my plans for my life.
- Independent spirit: working so God approves of me.

Truth: We must untie our life, let go & let Jesus use us in the way He desires.

The Lord needs us just as much as He needed little donkey. We are to be doing His work.

3. Donkey needs to be broken before he can be used.

Ride an animal that's not been broken in? The animal will resist! It bucks and jumps and doesn't like being ridden. Why?

Gen. 9:1-2b And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

² And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth,

There is a fear of mankind given to the animals. They have to be broken, be trained to accept people and not be afraid of them. Animals in large groups of people get spooked!

Consider: When God chooses to use me in a particular way, do I need to get past my fear of people and what they think of me?

God broke Jacob: Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

How did Jacob arrive at this point?

- 20 years earlier, he had deceitfully acquired Esau's birthright and blessing.
- He fled to live with Uncle Laban where he married Leah & Rachel.
- On his trip back home, Jacob stayed the night by himself at the brook, Jabbok.

Gen. 32:24-25 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

Ravenhill: Everyone wants to be clothed with power, but no one wants to be stripped of self.

²⁵ And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

- Wrestling encounter that night: Goal > get rid of his self-sufficiency.

Notice in Heb 11 the record of the great faith of some in the OT: shutting lions' mouths, raising the dead, tortured, stoned, sawn in half, living in caves, destitute etc.

Jacob is included in the Hall of Faith. "He worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

This seems insignificant in a chapter full of spectacular events!

Is this truly a "miracle of faith?" Absolutely!

The staff became necessary to Jacob, because his thigh had been dislocated at Peniel.

- Note Jacob's testimony was in his later years.

Consider: God meets us at the level He find us in order to lift us up to where He wants us to be. Leaning upon that staff, he would always remember the miracle that God had wrought in his life, in breaking his stubborn self-will. Leaning upon his staff symbolized his helpless, moment-by-moment dependence on God.

He worshipped God as a broken man. He gloried in his weakness and his infirmity.

What a wonderful thing to be purged by God. It results in fruitfulness for the Lord.

Jabbok: #H2999 = emptying; pouring forth

The Jabbok River is one of the principal tributaries of the Jordan River and one of the major watercourses of the Promised Land.

Jacob wrestled with a man [pre-incarnate Jesus Christ] all night long and was blessed.

Absolute Surrender: Potter's wheel; unflinching obedience to the commands of Christ;

Life-long process of surrendering to Him

4. Donkeys Don't Cooperate

Donkeys have a reputation of not working or cooperating until they trust the one they work for. When the disciples brought the colt to Jesus, the colt immediately trusted Jesus and carried

Him down the path into the city. For Jesus to come into Jerusalem in this manner was considered miraculous by those who witnessed it.

Jesus is about to ride a colt that's never been ridden, through a yelling, joyous crowd of people, throwing down coats and palm branches. It should be impossible! But he's the humble king with authority over all things, even the animals that he's created. Jesus doesn't need to break it. He's gentle in his authority. He simply heals the donkey of its fear, making it useful for him. With Jesus riding it, in control, this beast becomes completely fearless in the midst of the crowd.

If Jesus can do that for a mere donkey, how much more his people? How much more should we present ourselves for service, trusting in Christ's humble authority to take care of, lead us, make us fearless in the face of any circumstance?

God's purpose for Francine: 2008 God's plan was loading.

Spurgeon: Before God can use a man greatly, He must first break him.

We all have a built-in propensity to trust in ourselves.

Satan's sifting of Peter:

Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

- Sift = shake someone apart; break a person down

Satan's goal: Crush us; wreck our faith. Destroy the faith of every believer.

Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Note: Jesus did not promise to remove Peter's impending test.

Remember: Satan's power to sift Peter as wheat was limited by Christ's intercession.

When Satan comes after us, we should remember: Jesus Christ always lives to intercede for us.

5. God's Provision For The Donkey

The donkey colt was tied up with his mother. Imagine if he had been yanked away and expected to carry the Messiah all alone. Imagine if he was expected to fulfill his holy destiny all alone. If the donkey had been put through that kind of situation, he wouldn't have fulfilled his destiny. He would have problem run erratic through the streets and thrown the Christ off. He would have caused a scene but a scene of a different sort.

But Jesus considered the frailties and the insecurities of the donkey. Only Matthew records the fact that the donkey's mother was taken along. He was given the comfort of his mother's company. He still had to go through some new experiences that day. The Bible says he had never been ridden before, but he didn't have to go through them alone. His mom was there by his side.

- He had never walked this way before.

When God calls us to fulfill our holy destiny, it may also be uncomfortable for us. We may have to come out of our comfort zones. In order to fulfill our destinies, we, like the donkey, must endure some new experiences. We must sometimes go through hardships.

Personal: This path was set before me before I was born. My circumstances were so uncomfortable. I felt stretched to my limit. What was a transgender?

How long Lord? What can I do? God asked: Francine, what is your plan? I don't have one.

- Path to absolute surrender

Nancy Leigh DeMoss: Brokenness is the shattering of my self-will - the absolute surrender of my will to the will of God. It is saying, "Yes Lord," no resistance, no chafing, no stubbornness - simply submitting myself to His direction and will in my life.

Absolute Surrender: Potter's wheel; unflinching obedience to the commands of Christ;
Life-long process of surrendering to Him

Jesus has promised His own presence in the person of the Holy Spirit as we embark upon the journey that He has laid out for us. He understands our frailties and our limits.

Consider: Matt. 21:2b-3 Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you are to say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once.'

Just as the donkey had his mom to comfort him, we also, as we engage in the life that God has ordained for us, have the Holy Spirit to comfort and to guide us.

John 14:16-18 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

- For the Lord to use me and fulfill His purposes in me, He needs me filled with the Holy Spirit who will lead me and comfort me. I cannot do this on my own.

Submit to the Holy Spirit whose transforming power will complete the work in you.

Phil. 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- Promise > Reckon > Yield > Thanks

It was a conscious decision. God began changing me and growing me as I stood on the facts and promises of His Word. If I surrendered myself to Him, He promised to do the work.

Show up daily for Him to work in me through studying His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

- This change is not an imitation. It is a transformation.
- My circumstances did not change. I began changing.

6. Donkey's significance was found in a simple statement: The Lord needs him.

This one reality changed the significance of the donkey. Suddenly, he is a very important and very special donkey. There was nothing special in his own ability. He was special and significant because the Lord intended to use this donkey to bring glory to Himself.

- When Jesus sat upon the donkey, his status changed.

- Little Donkey was to be the mode of carrying the Messiah, the King, the Savior to His fulfillment of purpose on this earth.

The donkey woke up to an ordinary morning, but that day his destiny was fulfilled.

That day, he exalted Jesus Christ among the people. He introduced the Savior into Jerusalem.

Sometimes we may feel like this donkey, that we are insignificant, that there is nothing special about us. However, in those moments, we must realize that like the donkey our significance is found in the fact that Jesus Christ has called us. He has said to each of us, The Lord needs you.

- You were not created to stay tied up on the post of the city gate. God uses ordinary people, strengthening them in the significance of a relationship with Him.
- God comes to untie the ropes that are holding you back, to break every yoke, and to declare to you that your life is not over. There is still much to be done.
- He is in the business of untying donkeys—of breaking people free from that which holds them back.

Just as the donkey was called by the master to exalt Him, you have been called out of darkness and given a new significance to exalt Christ.

How did the disciples and Little Donkey respond to Jesus in this Scripture?

- Humble obedience and total faith.

Personal: Francine, I have called you to be the mother of a transgender. Difficult circumstance. The Holy Spirit will comfort you and guide you. Exalt Jesus Christ. Bring glory to Jesus Christ. When we have loosed the ties that hold us, let go of attitudes and behaviors that are binding, then we are ready to be used by the Lord.

Humble myself before Him so my life can bring glory to Christ alone.

God's grace is sufficient. His grace will not fail you. He will lift you out of the darkest pit.

Theme: Look What The Lord Has Done

Broken & Spilled Out

One day a plain village woman, driven by love for her Lord recklessly poured out a valuable essence, disregarding the scorn.

And once it was broken and spilled out, a fragrance filled all the room,

Like a pris'ner released from his shackles; like a spirit set free from the tomb.

Broken and spilled out, just for love of you Jesus. My most precious treasure lavished on Thee.

Broken and spilled out and poured at Your feet.

In sweet abandon, let me be poured out and used of for Thee.

Lord, You were God's special treasure; His loved and His own perfect Son.

Sent here to show me the love of the Father; just for love, it was done.

And though You were perfect and holy, You gave up Yourself willingly.

You spared no expense for my pardon. You were used up and wasted for me.

Broken and spilled out, just for love of you Jesus. My most precious treasure lavished on Thee.

Broken and spilled out and poured at Your feet.

In sweet abandon, let me be poured out and used of for Thee.