

“What Does Jesus Need?”

Mark 11:1-11

Palm/Passion Sunday; March 28, 2021

I suppose this is an odd question to think about: What does Jesus need? Mark's gospel narrates its spare story of Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus asks two of his disciples to go and find a colt for him. Not only this, but he gives explicit directions about how they are to get the colt. Mark tells the story in a noticeably restrained fashion. He doesn't give a lot of details. We can imagine vast crowds of people lining the streets. And yet besides the "several" who spread their cloaks on the road, Mark's only other mention of a crowd comes when he writes that "[t]hose in front, and those coming behind, shouted out..." Perhaps the crowds we anticipate never quite materialized. But then again, it was Jesus's ability to attract crowds that made him a threat to the Romans and why they weren't disappointed when people turned on him.

Mark draws on an Old Testament prophecy from the book of Zechariah that suggests the reason of Jesus asking for a colt: "Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, foal of a donkey" (9:9). Thus, from Mark's telling, Jesus's request for a colt connects the scene to Israel's messianic expectations. The disciples ask no further details like: "Golly, Jesus, how are we to feed the colt?" or "How do we convince the owner if he says no?" They ask none of this; they simply respond because it seems reasonable to believe that Jesus has good sense to know exactly what it is he's asking for.



We could speculate about the assorted other ways that Jesus might have obtained this colt. Yet Jesus simply asks his disciples to go and get it. The "how" of the attainment is perhaps not as important as the "why." Why Jesus tells his disciples to undertake this seemingly mundane task is because, possibly, he knows that someday the disciples' act, offered at this critical moment in Jesus's life, will figure in on their faith story. We human beings have a tendency to create ownership in the things in which we play a part.

In other words, the factors and events that summon our resources also invest us in these same experiences. Perhaps this is why Jesus called upon these disciples for this routine task of rounding up a colt. After all, in other gospels — think of Matthew's gospel — has Jesus announcing that he can "call on my father and have him send me more than twelve legions of angels..." (26:53). Jesus doesn't ask the disciples to do something for him he can't do for himself. After all, it's *his* mission, right? He can get his own colt. Rather, Jesus asks the disciples to do something that guides them further into the Jesus story. This simple story will stick with them their whole life long. It's a simple story that still sticks with us.

Pastors often hear people say that they have nothing to offer God. Any discerning Christian steward knows this is untrue. The definition of "steward" comes from a Greek word that means "to manage the whole household." Some common church

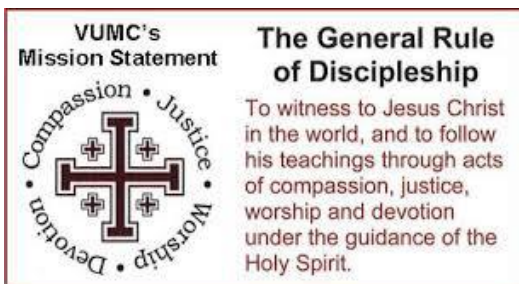
household offerings include teaching, ushering, listening, visiting, praying, giving, sewing, cleaning — and hopefully, some day yet again, cooking, among other things. We manage such a household here. It's worth noting that none of these services for the Lord are any more complicated than obtaining a colt. Sometimes our weak excuses for why we don't offer what we should to God may sound silly if we only stop to actually listen to them.



Some people repeat such excuses for so long that they truly believe them. There are plenty of good, well-meaning suggestions that come my way about what the church should be doing. These suggestions are quite often couched in language that means someone else should go and make it happen. That's typical of most any church, I suppose. Yet Jesus teaches *all* believers that we can authentically serve God and his kingdom by using both our treasure and our lives.

What does Jesus need from us — from you, from me — in this time and in this place? I suppose that's an odd, counter-intuitive question to think about. But if the church is first and foremost about *Jesus's* needs, and if stewardship of the house is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple, perhaps we should start with what Jesus is telling us to do, trusting that he has a good sense to know exactly what it is he's asking for and from whom.

That church mission statement we have from *The General Rule of Discipleship*?



— “To witness to Jesus Christ in the world and to follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” — that needs to undergird everything we do, from strategic planning right down to turning on a light switch. So that when Jesus asks for something, we're willing to serve. There are many Jesus-inspired ideas

in the air around here.

What does Jesus need? More disciples ready to go.

Lord Jesus Christ, even as you entered Jerusalem, on this day enter our world, enter our hearts and lives, and come to us and rule over us.

Teach us, day by day, to serve you as you ought to be served, to walk with you where you walk, to talk as you talk, and to be the faithful followers you deserve.

Give us the strength to follow you toward the cross, not thinking about ourselves and our needs, but focusing upon God's reign and its triumph. Amen.