**Sermon 4/14/19**

**Luke 19:28-40**

Life here on earth can often be very difficult and confusing.

We – or at least I – end up with a lot of questions and few answers.

When I get to heaven I imagine I will have a chance to sit down

         and have a long talk with God and ask him those questions.

I know that when he explains it all to me I will understand.

But right now I don't understand.

          I want to know:

Why did you do that God?

Why did you let this happen?

Where were you, God, when this event occurred and I couldn't feel your presence?

Why did you answer those prayers that way?

Why didn't you help me a little more?

Make the way a little smoother?

Make the journey a little easier?

These are only a few of the questions for which I don't have the answers right now.

So, in order to avoid spending too much time,

          or wasting too much energy wrestling with them, I keep a mental list.

It is a list of all the questions I have for God when I get to heaven,

          and we sit down for a while together.

What I can't understand in this mortal body,

          I will be able to understand in my eternal one.

What I don't see now, I will then.

I'm looking forward to our visit together, God and me.

Until then, from time to time I add more questions to my list.

The next thing I want to do when I get to heaven,

          is look up some of the people I've heard about but never met.

After my chat with God, I want to locate Mother Teresa and ask her how so much

          courage and strength and faith could be contained in such a tiny person.

I want to look up Martin Luther, and ask him how it felt when he took

          a stand on scripture, instead of doing what the people wanted.

I want to find Moses,

          and ask him what it felt like to hit a rock and have water gush out.

I would like to know how Daniel felt that night in the lion's den.

I want to ask the disciples what it was like to hand out a few fish

          and loaves of bread to thousands, and have plenty of leftovers.

And when we all get home there's someone else I want to get to know.

I want to meet the guy with the donkey.

I don't know his name or what he looks like, but God does,

          and I'm sure he'll point him out to me.

The only thing I know about him is what he gave.

He gave a donkey to Jesus on the Sunday he entered Jerusalem.

          Jesus said to two of his disciples:

"Go into the village and as you enter it, you will find tied there a young donkey.

Untie it and bring it to me.

If anyone asks you why you are doing this, just say: the Lord needs it."

When we all get to heaven I want to visit this fellow who owned that donkey.

I have several questions for him:      How did you know?

          How did you know it was Jesus who needed a donkey?

          Did you have a vision?           Did you get a telegram?

          Did an angel appear in your bowl of lentils?

Was it hard to give?

           Was it difficult to give something to Jesus for him to use?

          I want to ask that question because sometimes it's hard for me.

          Sometimes I like to keep my animals to myself.

Sometimes when God wants something I act like I don't know he needs it.

How did it feel?    How did it feel to look out, and see Jesus

            on the back of the donkey that lived in your barn?

Were you proud?                     Were you surprised?      Were you annoyed?

Did you know? Did you have any idea that your generosity

          would be used for such a noble purpose?

Did it ever occur to you that God was going to ride your donkey?

Were you aware that all four gospel writers would tell your story?

Did it ever cross your mind that a couple of millenniums later,

           a curious pastor would be pondering your plight late at night?

And as I ponder yours, I ponder mine.

Sometimes I get the impression that God wants me to give him something,

            -- and sometimes I don't give it because I don't know for sure,

           and then I feel bad because I've missed my chance.

Other times I know he wants something,

             -- but I don't give it because I'm too selfish.

And other times, -- too few times, -- I hear him and I obey him and feel

        honored that a gift of mine would be used to carry Jesus into another place.

And still other times, I wonder if my little deeds today,

          will really make any difference in the long haul.

Maybe you have those questions, too.

All of us have a donkey.

We each have something in our lives, which, if given back to God, could,

            like the donkey, move Jesus and his story further down the road.

Maybe you can sing, or hug, or program a computer, or speak Swahili,

             or write a check, or offer a few words of encouragement.

Whichever, that's your donkey.

Whichever, your donkey belongs to him.

It really does belong to him.

Your gifts are his and the donkey was his.

Jesus told his disciples that if anyone says "Why are you doing this?"

              they were to reply "The Lord needs it."

Jesus was claiming his right as Lord and King. He is speaking as one in authority.

He is stating that as King he has rights to any possession of his subjects.

It could be that God wants to mount your donkey

               and enter the walls of another city, another nation, another heart.

Do you let him?   Do you give it?     Or do you hesitate?

That guy who gave Jesus the donkey,

            is just one in a long line of folks who gave little things to a big God.

Scripture has quite a gallery of donkey-givers.

In fact, heaven may have a shrine or a museum

            to honor God's uncommon use of the common.

It's a place you won't want to miss.

Stroll through and see Rahab's rope, Paul's bucket, David's sling,

               and Samson's jawbone.

Wrap your hand around the staff which split the sea and smote the rock.

Sniff the ointment which soothed Jesus' feet and lifted his heart.

Rest your head on the same cloak which gave comfort to Jesus in the boat,

     and run your hand along the smooth wood of the manger, soft as a baby's skin.

Or set your shoulder beneath the heavy Roman beam, as coarse as a traitor's kiss.

I don't know if these items will be there.

But I am sure of one thing – the people who used them will.

The risk-takers: Rahab who sheltered the spy. The brethren who smuggled Paul.

The conquerors:

          David, slinging a stone. Samson, swinging a bone. Moses, lifting a rod.

The care-givers: Mary at Jesus' feet. What she gave cost much,

         but somehow she knew what he would give would cost much more.

The anonymous disciple in the boat.

               He made a bed out of the boat, so God could take a nap.

          And the curious pilgrim on the side of the Via Dolorosa.

For all we know, he knew very little.

He just knew Jesus' bloody, beaten back was weary, and his own back was strong.

So when the soldier pointed, this man came.

Quite a fraternity, is it not?

Strong stewards who view what is theirs as his,

          and make it available whenever he might need it.

Sharecroppers of the vineyard, who haven't forgotten who owns the property.

Loyal students who remember who is paying the tuition.

Here's another:

A nineteenth-century Sunday school teacher who led a Boston shoe clerk to Christ.

The teacher's name you've never heard: Kimball.

The name of the shoe clerk he converted you may have: Dwight Moody.

Moody became an evangelist and had a major influence on a young preacher

          named Frederick B. Meyer.

Meyer began to preach on college campuses and while doing so,

         he converted J. Wilbur Chapman.

Chapman became involved in the YMCA and arranged for a former baseball

    player named Billy Sunday to come to Charlotte, North Carolina, for a revival.

A group of Charlotte community leaders were so enthusiastic afterward, that they

     planned another campaign and brought Mordecai Hamm to town to preach.

In that revival a young man named Billy Graham yielded his life to Christ.

Did the Boston school teacher have any idea what would become of his

          conversation with the shoe salesman?

No, he, like the owner of the donkey,

           simply had a chance to help Jesus journey into another heart, so he did.

We never know what will become of the words and actions and possessions

            we give to God. But God does. God uses tiny seeds to reap great harvests.

It is on the back of donkeys he rides – not steeds or chariots – just simple donkeys.

Few of us ever know how much further down the road we helped Jesus travel.

We don't know what hearts he was able to enter because of the gifts we gave him.

The guy with the donkey didn't. Samson didn't. Moses and Rahab didn't.

The shoe salesman didn't, and we don't either.

No sower of small seeds can know the extent of his harvest.

But don't be surprised if in heaven, next to David's sling and Moses' rod

                and the donkey's rope you discover some small gift you gave to God.

Everything we have is his. He is King in our hearts and of our lives.

         He is Lord of the universe.

If we can remember that, then when God asks us for our donkey,

           we can give him what is really his anyway.

And in our small ways we can help him a few more steps along on his journey –

          into another community,                   another nation,               another heart.

Amen