

# The Lord Needs You

Message for Palm Sunday, April 14, 2019  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** Matthew 21:1-9

## Children's Message:

Every few years, Queen Elizabeth comes to visit Canada. She might even come to visit Stirling! We should be prepared, just in case that happens.

When you meet the queen, you don't just walk up to her and say, "Hey, how's it going, Liz"? I'll teach you the proper way.

If you're a boy, you bow your head. If you're a girl, you curtsy (step back slightly with right foot, and bend both knees). *Demonstrate both in turn.* OK, now you do it. Good!

Then you say, "Your Majesty," rather than saying her name.

Well, Queen Elizabeth isn't coming today. But Jesus is here! I don't read anything in the Bible about whether we bow or curtsy to Jesus. Besides, I think he's not interested in that kind of thing. Jesus is much more interested in your heart and your mind.

That is, he wants to be *in* your heart and your mind. And that's what I would want in me, too.

**Message:** "The Lord needs you"<sup>1</sup>

Every year in December, we have the Christmas parade. It's lots of fun, with lots of colourful vehicles, music, horses, and lots of people. One person in particular stands out from everyone else. There are some clues: this person is often seated on a sleigh, and this person wears a bright red jacket. Those two clues—the sleigh and the red jacket—tell us this person is Santa Claus.

When Jesus was in the parade that day we now call "Palm Sunday," there were two clues that he was someone special: he was riding a donkey, and he came down the road from the Mount of Olives. I'll

explain that in a minute. But first a little background.

In the time of Jesus, God's people longed for a king to reign over them. For more than sixty years, they have been under the boot of Rome. A governor, appointed by Caesar, is the ruler over Israel.

No king? Huh? What about King Herod? Wasn't he the king over Israel? Hah! Yes, the Romans allowed Israel to have a pretend king, a puppet on a string. He would do exactly as he was told. And why not? Even though the king had little power, whoever sat in that seat became immensely wealthy. You've heard me describe how tax collectors were despised by the Jewish people. The king was just a little bit above a tax collector in the eyes of the people.

God's people have been praying for a king—a *real* king—for those sixty years, someone who would turn tables on the Romans and give *them* the boot. They were praying, "God, you promised through your prophets that you would send a saviour, someone to rescue us and rule over us. Do it now, God! We need you."

In Zechariah 14:4, it says that the saviour would stand on the Mount of Olives, the hill just outside Jerusalem to the east. There is even more detail in Zechariah chapter 9.

**Zechariah 9:9, New International Version:**

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

So when Jesus, this famous prophet and miracle man from Galilee in the north, begins his parade, guess where he starts from? Guess what he's sitting on?

**Luke 19:35-38, New International Version:**

They brought [the colt] to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

When [Jesus] came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Kevin Miller, a pastor in Illinois, for some of the key ideas in this message.

**“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”**

**“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”**

When the people see this, they immediately understand what’s going on. They know the signs the prophet had given. The crowd goes wild with excitement! People take off their jackets and lay them on the road, so that even the hooves of the donkey carrying the king don’t have to touch the dirt. That’s how excited they are!

The Romans know nothing about prophets from hundreds of years ago, but they get it. They see what’s going on. Five days later they kill this new king, and put a sign over his head with his title: “King of the Jews.”

Through his entire life, Jesus walked everywhere. He is too poor to own a donkey, much less a horse. But in this brief moment, to fulfill the prophecies and to communicate to the people that their king and saviour has come, Jesus needs a donkey.

There is something really interesting about this passage in the Bible. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem is found in three of the four Gospels. In Matthew’s gospel, it takes nine verses in chapter 21. Seven of those nine verses are about the donkey. In Mark 10, seven out of the ten verses are about the donkey. In Luke 19, seven out of eleven verses are about the donkey. If you go just by the numbers, the donkey is more important than Jesus!

Here is the introduction to the donkey:

**Matthew 21:1-3, New International Version:**  
As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

Luke tells us what happened next:

**Luke 19:32-35, New International Version:**  
Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

**They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.**

Jesus told them that if anyone tries to stop you, just say, “The Lord needs it.” And that’s exactly what happens.

Now how do you explain that? Some Bible commentators say that Jesus privately went there a week earlier and made the arrangements. Other Bible commentators say that it’s a sign that Jesus has supernatural, divine knowledge of the situation. Both theories are plausible, so choose whichever one you like. I lean towards the latter, because if Jesus had arranged it ahead of time, the owners would be expecting this. So when the disciples start untying the donkey, they would have said, “Oh, you must be the people Jesus told us about. Go ahead.”

Let’s look at that sentence they used to get permission to take the donkey: “The Lord needs it.”

Notice anything unusual, anything strange about that sentence? It’s what English teachers call an oxymoron. That’s when you have two words together that contradict each other. Some examples: “Act naturally,” “unbiased opinion,” “plastic silverware.” People in the Armed Forces have told me one of their favourites: “military intelligence.”

The Lord doesn’t need anything!

**Psalms 50:10-12, New Living Translation:**  
For all the animals of the forest are mine,  
and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.  
Every bird of the mountains  
and all the animals of the field belong to me.  
If I were hungry, I would not mention it to you,  
for all the world is mine and everything in it.

Jesus is Lord over all the earth; everything belongs to him. Yet Jesus, as Paul writes in Philippians 2:7, “gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant.” So he truly did need a donkey.

“But what,” you might be scratching your head right now, “does all this have to do with us?”

Imagine Jesus sends a messenger to you, and says to you, “The Lord needs it.” What is it in your life that Jesus has been nudging you to make available to him? Is it your time? Is it your money? And you

think, “Well that would involve a commitment. I don’t know.” Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem to be killed on the cross, killed for you and for me, and you’re talking about commitment?

Maybe Jesus is asking for you to use your influence, your reputation to do something important. But you’re worried what people will think. “The Lord needs it. The Lord needs *you*.”

You see, the wonderful thing about giving to Jesus is that he returns it. The owners got their donkey back. You give Jesus your worship and he returns it to you with joy. You give him your obedience, he returns it with peace in your spirit.

Think about the people who owned that donkey. I can imagine them later saying, “You see that donkey over there? I’ll never sell it. Because our Messiah, Jesus, rode on that donkey when he entered Jerusalem. I’m so glad that when I heard the words, ‘The Lord needs it,’ I let them take it.

What is Jesus asking from you? Let him have it, and you’ll never regret it. You’ll be forever glad for that moment.

### **Next Steps:**

- Pray: Offer yourself to Jesus. “I’m here, I’m yours, I’m available.”
- Be open to what Jesus might need, and where he might need you. Be sensitive to his spiritual nudge. Learn to trust him to guide you.
- Do it!