

Sermon for Sunday, April 7, 1974 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
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"COATS IN THE ROAD"

St. Luke 19:29-46

Text: "So those who were sent went away and found it as he had told them."
St. Luke 19:32

The only time most ministers--including myself--preach on the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is on Palm Sunday. Because of this, we tend to paint the scene of Palm Sunday with broad strokes of the verbal brush. The only problem with doing that is that there are some rather small details involved in the event that we tend to miss. For that reason, this Palm Sunday I want to do something a little different. I want us to focus in on several little things that happened that day. You know, I discovered a long time ago that life has few really big events in it. Instead, life for the most part is made up of the little, seemingly insignificant things. But it's those little things that are the tip-off to our character. How we act day by day and how we handle the little ordinary details of life tell the story of our true character. How we handle the little things determines how we handle the big things when they do come along. So, for that reason, I want to call to our attention some small things about Palm Sunday that we might miss otherwise.

Now, I hope you have your Bibles this morning so that you can look at the passages I'm going to talk about. The first detail of the story of Palm Sunday to which I would draw your attention is verse 32 of St. Luke, 19th chapter. Now, Jesus has just given his disciples some instructions. Actually, they are rather unusual instructions. They are to go to a certain place where they will find a colt. They are to untie him, and bring the animal to Jesus. If the owner stops them, they are told what to say. Actually, when you stop to think about it, that is a peculiar order! Having lived in Texas for a while, I would personally be reluctant to go get that colt because I know what they do to horse thieves! But the little detail I want to call to your attention in verse 32 is this phrase, "So those who were sent went...." Yes, the sent went. The triumphant entry into Jerusalem begins on a note of compliance!

Let me just raise some questions for us about this event. How did Jesus know the colt would really be there? How did he know the owners would let the disciples take it? What was he going to do with the animal anyway? Now, put yourselves in the place of the disciples. Would you have put some of those questions to Jesus? I can imagine what I might have said to Jesus. I would have said, "Look, Jesus, why do you want me to do a strange thing like that? You don't know for sure the colt is there and those guys might get mad if I walk off with their colt. Look, it's only a few blocks to Jerusalem, why don't we just walk on and we'll be there before you know it." But look at the Bible. The Bible says that the sent went. Palm Sunday happened because the followers of Jesus complied--they did what they were asked--the sent went. And because they followed the request of Jesus, the prophecy of Zecharia was fulfilled and the profound significance of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem has been etched indelibly onto the pages of history. Yes, compliance.

Have you ever felt the Lord leading you to do something? Maybe it seemed foolish or out of character for you, but in your heart you really felt you ought to do a certain thing? It is true that in hours to come the disciples of Jesus were to deny and desert their lord. But it is to their eternal credit that when he asked them to do a little, seemingly foolish, insignificant thing, they complied--the sent went. Does it occur to you that maybe that's the sort of compliance, the sort of

loyalty, God wants from you and me? I firmly believe God speaks today to people like you and like me. He gives us little orders to follow--little commands to obey. Remember the letter you felt you ought to write? Remember the person standing alone that you felt you ought to speak to even though you didn't know him? Remember the lonely person that came to your mind, the little act of kindness for someone you thought of, the word of love and reassurance you thought of that you wanted to say to someone, the phone call you felt an urge to make? Maybe it seemed foolish--maybe unimportant--the Bible says the sent went--the disciples of Jesus did what he asked--yes, compliance. And the question that comes to mind on Palm Sunday is this: Can Jesus count on me? When he speaks to me do I give him compliance?

Now, I want you to look at the rest of verse 32. You see, it not only says that the sent went, it goes on to add, "(they) found it as he had told them." Whereas the first phrase speaks to us of the disciples' compliance, this phrase speaks to us of God's reliance. Yes, when the sent went, they found that God was reliable. Isn't that fantastic? It is a glorious thing to serve the Lord in trusting compliance, because whatever God asks you to do, when you are obedient you discover that he has already prepared the way. Things turn out just the way he promised. You can trust God--He won't let you down! Here Jesus asks his disciples to do a trusting, child-like thing. When they comply, they discover God to be absolutely reliable because it was just as he had told them.

Living the Christian life turns out to be just as simple as that. When we comply with the commands of God, no matter how simple or foolish they might seem, we discover that our God is absolutely reliable. In my own ministry I have seen this happen time and time again. At the door shaking hands with some person I have felt the need to see or call that person that week only to discover some desperate need. In a hospital room I have felt led to say some particular thing that helped an anxious person open up and share his fears. In a counseling situation I have felt led to suggest a certain sin or spiritual condition only to open the floodgates of healing, cleansing confession. Yes, compliance to God's leading led to the discovering of God's reliance.

Now, you try that in your life. The Bible says in Romans Eight that God's Spirit is at work in us. Through the physical instrument of our brains--our minds and our hearts--God addresses himself to us. He speaks to us and gives us guidance and direction. As we respond in obedient compliance, we discover that we have been led rightly--God is reliable. And do you know what our world needs so badly this morning? It is Christians who are listening to the voice of God, responding to his commands in simple compliance. And when we do that, we will discover just how reliable God is, how trustworthy is his leading. When the sent went, God used that simple act to initiate the greatest event in human history.

The next little detail of Palm Sunday I would call to your attention is in verse 34 of the 19th chapter of St. Luke. When the disciples of Jesus obeyed Jesus and found the colt as he had told them they would, the owners of the animal asked them, "Why are you untying the colt." Then comes verse 34. The disciples reply, "The Lord has need of it." Now, I don't know who the owners of the colt were because the Bible doesn't tell us. However, it is fairly obvious that these are friends of Jesus and he has probably made some pre-arrangements with them to use their colt. So when the time comes that Jesus needs something they have, without a murmur of protest, without a moment of hesitation, they permit the disciples to take the animal.

Here we are introduced to the principle of cooperation. Jesus could have called legions of angels to his aid upon his entrance into Jerusalem. Instead, he chose

to enter into partnership with some unnamed followers and rode into the pages of history on the back of their colt. Had you lived back then, and had you been able to provide the transportation for Jesus that day, would you have thrilled at the opportunity to share, to cooperate, in that grand adventure? You know very well you would have!

Well, the fact is, God still chooses to use the principle of cooperation. God has the mighty power to do anything he desires. But the glorious truth is, he still chooses to let you and me have a share in what he is doing in the world today. And it is a glorious thing to know this morning that however little I might have, God chooses to take it and use it when I put it at his disposal. He lets me be partners with him. So whatever you have this morning, when you trustingly put it at God's disposal, he takes our little gifts and uses them for mighty things.

Do you have the ability to teach? "The Lord has need of it." Do you have the ability to share your faith? "The Lord has need of it." Do you have financial resources? "The Lord has need of it." Do you have the time to pray--or serve--do you have some special talent? "The Lord has need of it." Do you have a life to give to Jesus? "The Lord has need of it." You--whoever you are--can be partners with God. The whole city of Jerusalem waited for the coming of the promised Messiah, but Jesus was waiting on the cooperation of the owners of a little colt. And outside these walls a whole city is waiting on the coming of Jesus to change their lives--to give them hope and courage and faith--to give them a new life. And Jesus is waiting on some people like us to put our lives at his disposal. Yes, the principle of cooperation, for the Lord has need of you.

Now, let's go back for a moment to the incident when the disciples are asked by the owners of the colt why they are untying him. You see, in St. Mark 11:3, the Bible gives us another little detail that is important here. According to St. Mark when the disciples are asked why they are taking the animal they not only say that Jesus needs it, the Bible adds this important phrase, "and (he) will return him quickly." And here we are introduced to the principle of restoration. God doesn't ask a thing of us but that he restores it. One commentator writes, "Is it too fanciful to add that what we lend him for his use he lays back in our hands a hundred-fold?" Anything you put in God's hands, he will restore it to you blessed and enriched.

I remember one day a friend sharing with me his spiritual pilgrimage. He had been wrestling with giving his life completely and wholly to Jesus--just surrendering everything to Jesus. What held him back was thinking of all of the things he would have to give up to really follow Jesus. "But you know," he said, "I didn't have to give up anything. Whatever I hated to give up and the things I was so reluctant to surrender, God gave things back to me that were so much greater, so much more blessed that I almost feel guilty. You see, I discovered that I got back so much more than I ever gave." Well, that is the way it works with Jesus. He never asks us for a thing but that he gives us so much more in return. What blessings you and I are missing this morning! God never asks us for a thing but that he restores it many times over. When we take what we have in life--our time, our money, our abilities, our love and--yes--our lives, and put them at God's disposal, he takes what we give him and restores it to us blessed and enhanced and enriched beyond our wildest dreams. Yes, cooperation and restoration. Try that in your life and see if it doesn't work for you. As the Bible puts it, "The Master needs him and will return him quickly."

Let me add one closing thought. We have been talking about compliance and reliance, about cooperation and restoration, but let me mention one other little detail. In our scripture this morning we read that in verse 35 the disciples threw their gar-

ments on the animal; in verse 36 we read the people spread their cloaks on the road; and in verse 37 we read they began to praise the Lord with a loud voice. What we see here is reckless spiritual abandonment. One writer has called it "unbridled devotion." Do you know who the happiest people in the world are? They are the people who have given themselves completely and totally and utterly to some great cause without reservation. And that's the picture on Palm Sunday. A lot of us are not happy Christians this morning. Dare I suggest that it is because we are afraid of being fanatics, ashamed of showing emotion, not willing to give "unbridled devotion" to Jesus? And if Jesus isn't doing as much for your life as you might like him to, let me ask you, how much of your life have you given to him?

Dwight L. Moody was a great man of God a generation ago. He shook England and Scotland and America for Jesus. He was basically an ignorant, uneducated man. But he had the thought one day that the world had yet to see what God could do with a fully committed man and he set out to be that man. God used such unbridled devotion to reach the world for Jesus. St. Louis has yet to see what God can do with a fully committed congregation--people like you and me--and what if on this Palm Sunday you and I set out to be that congregation?