

Matthew 21:1-11

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹ And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

Everyone wants to have a big god—a god big enough to take care of all problems, big enough to control events and set everything on the right path, big enough to be bigger than the enemy.

How big is your God?

On a big scale, a worldwide scale, this leads to proving how big your god is.

If you have to prove how big your god is, then he has to be bigger than the other gods, and to prove that, you have to kill people who belong to that other god, even if they are otherwise harmless; you have to take over land and impose laws and governments; you even blow up buildings, if that's what it takes to prove your god is big.

On a small scale, a scale as small as you and me, it's just as devastating.

If I have to prove how big my god is, the proof will come in my life. How will that work? Maybe to prove my god, I will have to put forth a life which anyone can see as successful and effective. Or to prove my god, I will call upon him and give him a chance to prove himself: *"Here, god, I gave you some of my money in offering, now, can you bless me back tenfold? If you can, you must be a really big god."* Or, *"Listen, god, I'm declaring to you who I am and what belongs to me. When you hear my list, you can fulfill my declaration, because that's what gods do."*

If my life is messed up, then it should be easy to prove god. A god who can clean up a life, get rid of bad habits, defeat addictions, instill good habits and create success, what could be better than that?

Everyone wants to have a big god. No one goes around saying,
"Look, take a look at how my God is with me, he sees my sin, he knows the shame that belongs to me, he is not fooled about how I am flailing in this world of sin and death, and yet, he is with me, he loves me, and I am clean not because I myself am clean, but because he cleanses me with his word."

No one goes around saying,
"It would be humiliating for God to be with the sinner, but God wants to be known in his humility."

No one would say that. Until, they look at God riding on a donkey, willingly going to his death:

⁷ [The disciples] brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and [Jesus] sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

[Matthew 21:8]

God enters Jerusalem. God-in-the-flesh is riding in so everyone can see him, and he's sitting not on a warhorse, nor a chariot, nor with an entourage of princes and soldiers, but a lone Man, God-in-the-flesh, riding on the back of a lowly farm animal:

"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

[Matthew 21:5]

The world has never seen a god like this before.

The find a god which everyone wants, the world makes up images— idols of wood and stone. Or, if not physical idols, the world makes up images in the mind, concepts of god. The world has made up images of god as the moon, as the sun, as the water, as the wind, as, the storm, as the bull-ox, as the lion, and if the idolatry of the Romans and the Greeks and the rest of the ancient civilizations is not enough, the world also has images of god as a principle that will help you run your life scientifically, or as great modern ideologies that will organize our societies and bring about equality and prosperity and happiness and whatever else one wants to throw in there.

The world has made many images of god, as powerful as the sun or the wind, as the lion or the bull, as the modern human ideologies, or the great government programs. But the world has never seen a god that comes in the flesh, so that as a Man he can ride into town on a farm animal.

And he rides into town to die.

He comes to the sinner in humility.

His death—no manmade god willingly dies for those who hate him and build up their own gods. But the true God does. He wants to be known for his humility. He wants to be known not for staying away from the sinner, but for coming to the sinner, and dying for him.

Who is this sinner the Lord wants to die for? Just look at God's holy Law.

God's holy Law, by the way, is *not* humble. It's exalted and strong. It cannot be broken. The sinner cannot trick it by constructing an argument that somehow the Law hasn't caught him out. Romans 13:

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

That's Law you can't trick or argue your way out of.

If God's Law were a bunch of regulations about what kind of food to eat, what kind of clothing to wear, or what days to observe, even if his Law were rules about how you must do certain good deeds, or how you should go about organizing your life so your life is filled with purpose, well, *that* we could work with. You can trick that kind of Law, you can argue about it and try to justify yourself. If you break one of the regulations, you only need to come up with another regulation that tells how to make up for it.

But what do you do when the Law is Love?:

⁹ **For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.**

The Law is not just about actions toward your neighbor. You can do good actions, but not out of Love, but rather out of self-advancement, or out of guilt, or out of manipulation.

You can't fulfill the Law with just actions. It's love. So it's not good enough to take some food to your neighbor who is hungry. You must take food to him *out of love*. It's not good enough to not commit adultery, you must not commit adultery *out of love*. It's no good to not steal from your neighbor, unless you don't steal because you love him; it's no good to not covet from the rich man, unless you don't covet because you love him.

Romans 13:9:

Love is the fulfilling of the Law.

That's Law you can't argue your way out of.

And then we see Jesus, lowly, humble, riding on the back of a donkey. Because he wants to be with the sinner, to die for the sinner, to redeem you and me, to forgive us of our lack of love. It's not even *lack* of love. It's enmity—that's the word God uses. It's love-of-self so deep seated that we hate everything that doesn't serve us. It's enmity with God. But he's the God riding on the donkey to die for those who have not fulfilled love.

He died for us. That's love. He wants to be known for his humility. He *does*, of course, have all power. There is no doubt of that. The word of

creation is his, also the word of judgment. Nothing is outside of his power.

But he wants to be known for his humility. He rides into town on the back of the donkey, because he *wants* to be judged by Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate, to be put on the cross; for in undergoing that judgment, in pouring out that blood, he's undergoing judgment in our place.

At his death, all sins are accounted for. He rose from the dead. He ascended to Heaven. And now he comes to you and me and our children. Not in the mighty wind. Not in the power of the sun or the beauty of the oceans, nor in the methods of how to live nor the programs of how to make everything work.

He comes humble.

In a lowly word spoken by a voice from the pulpit—he comes using the voice of a faulty pastor to speak the word absolving the sinner and making clean. Lowly and humble—a Word spoken into the ear. But at that word, the sinner lives.

He comes in the water and the word—a rite that would appear ritualistic and manmade, except that he instituted in his Word, and in it he clothes the sinner in his own righteousness.

He comes in simple bread and wine, hardly impressive, but by his Word he is there giving himself, Body and Blood, to the sinner for the forgiveness of sins.

He comes humble. But it is to cleanse the sinner—to save you and me.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.