



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

April 5, 2020

**The One Man  
Riding a Donkey Parade**  
Dr. Bruce Lancaster

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## The One Man Riding a Donkey Parade

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*Matthew 21:1-11*

Are you a parade person? I am!

I have had the great fortune to sit in the main grandstand and watch the Rose Bowl parade from beginning to end; I've yelled "throw me something" at many a Mardi Gras parade; I've waited for Santa Claus at oh-so-many Christmas parades; Macy's Thanksgiving Parade is on my bucket list; and who can count all the others:

Circus parades, Homecoming and 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and nowadays we're getting parades of teachers driving through their students' neighborhoods or drive-by birthday greetings. Everybody loves a parade, don't they?

Well, what about this parade in our gospel lesson this morning? It's kind of a weird parade when you compare it to all the others...This one man, riding a donkey.

But maybe the weirdness of this parade is the kind of parade we need in what my friend Jason Freyer says is a 'season of weird.'

In our gospel story, it's Passover time in Jerusalem; there again, celebrating a parade of Hebrew slaves out of Egypt.

According to the story, Jesus arranged this one-man parade in spite of the fact that Herod wanted to kill him; that he had provoked the religious authorities, whom he called out as greedy, selfish, arrogant, insensitive. No one was going to be giving him the keys to the city!

Some would say that Jesus was simply fulfilling the words of the prophets. Matthew was certainly connecting Jesus to the prophets as he wrote his passion narrative.

It's obvious from the gospel stories that this man who wept for peace over the city wasn't going to be a military Messiah and run the Romans out of Jerusalem.

He was not going to be bullied by the Pharisees or even swayed by these people along the parade route.

I think Jesus was making his own prophetic statement to his followers and to his enemies in this parade of just who he is and what his life is all about.

The time for secrecy was over. The time to speak truth to power and expose the duplicity and hypocrisy of the religious leaders and the oppressive powers of the world had arrived.

The time to speak for the powerless and to offer an alternative voice and way of living was at hand.

Now here, this one man riding a donkey... the human figure of divine speech, the son of God, the Living Word...this one-man-riding-a-donkey-parade reveals his singular and steadiness of purpose that kept him from ever forsaking his commitment as one of us for us, even to the point of death.

Mattie Stepanek, 13 years old when he died, knowing early on that he would die, gives words to this purpose for living, in one of his poems:

## The One Man Riding a Donkey Parade

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*I wanted to live  
To be  
One hundred and one  
Years old.  
But that is no  
Longer my goal.  
When I die,  
I die.  
I cannot predict.  
I cannot control.  
I cannot change  
What is to be,  
Which is what it is  
And will be  
What it will be.  
I wanted to live  
To be,  
And not die.  
But,  
While I'm alive,  
I live  
To the fullest.  
I treasure each sunrise.  
I remember each sunset.  
I dance every dance and  
I sing every song and  
I celebrate every moment.  
I wanted to live  
To be.  
And,  
I am spending my time  
On earth before death  
Living,  
Rather than dying,  
And not wasting a moment  
Of the precious gifts*

*Of time and  
Of life and  
Of being, for now.* (“About Living, Part 3.”)

This one-man-riding-a-donkey parade challenges you and me not to waste a moment of the precious time we have now.

Following him is a choice to walk away from the parades of power at any price that abuse and humiliate those below them, that ignores, neglects, and rejects the truth.

Following this one man riding a donkey is a choice to sacrifice and self-denial, rather than stand on our privileges while others suffer.

Following Jesus is a choice to live in his way of what truly makes for peace and justice, mercy and community wherever it may lead us.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY



**WESTMINSTER**  
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2040 Washington Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15241  
412-835-6630  
[www.westminster-church.org](http://www.westminster-church.org)