



Vehicles of Good News
A sermon on Mark 11:1-11

Sunday, March 25th, 2018 • Palm Sunday
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
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Cube Point is a 9,600 foot granite spire in Grand Teton National Park. As the name suggests, the top is as close to a perfect cube as, you can find. It is also the place where I did my first solo free climbing, which is climbing without a partner, rope, or any protective gear. I had done that climb about half a dozen times so I didn't think it would be a big deal for my brother, Luke, and I to climb it. Being a climbing purist, I wanted to climb it with him "alpine" style, light and fast, with minimal gear. One liter of water per person and a water filtration system for when we ran out and needed to clean some water from a mountain stream or glacial lake. Everything went according to plan. We reached the top by 10 am. Rappelling back down went without a hitch. Soon we were back at Hanging Lake ready to refill our empty water bottles. As I rummaged through my pack my heart was hit by a jolt of adrenaline. I couldn't find the water filtration system. In a panic I dumped everything out only to realize I had left it on the floor, in my apartment, back in Jackson some 20 miles away. With seven hours of climbing behind us and a three hour hike back to the car we needed water!

Humans need water to live. We need water to lubricate our joints. We need water to regulate our body temperature. We need water to stay properly hydrated. We need water to think clearly. It was supposed to be a simple climb, up, down, safe and sound. My forgetfulness had jeopardized our well-being because we needed water. Standing next to the lake with the contents of my backpack piled on the ground we had no way of getting any drinkable water.

People have more needs than just water. We have a whole hierarchy of needs. We have biological and physiological needs. We have safety needs. We have love and longing needs. We have esteem needs. We have self-actualization needs. To be human is to have needs. We, human beings, have all sorts of needs.

Our needs have led people to wonder if God has needs? (Does God need anything?) After centuries of discussion and in-depth biblical examination the conclusion is God does not need anything. The answer is simple, "no." No, God doesn't need a thing. Unlike humans who need water, God doesn't need anything, not even elements like Hydrogen and Oxygen. This conclusion is based on three self-evident truths found in the Bible. First, God is omnipotent, meaning God is all powerful, limitless strength and efficiency. God created everything seen and unseen. Second, God is omnipresent, meaning God is everywhere at all times. Not a moment in history has passed without God being there. Third, God is omniscient, meaning God is all knowing. Nothing has come to pass without God's knowledge and nothing will happen without God knowing about it. All of that is to say, God doesn't need anything.

It is curious then, that in Mark 11 while Jesus and the disciples are traveling towards Jerusalem he tells two of his disciples to go into the village ahead of them where there is a colt tied up. Jesus instructs them to bring it back to him and if anyone stops them and questions them they are to say “The Lord needs it...” Just as Jesus predicted people stopped the disciples and ask them what they were doing. They responded just as Jesus instructed them to “The Lord needs it.” The Lord needs it? Alright, so God doesn’t need anything, and yet Jesus needed colt? That is a difficult one to reconcile.

What was the colt to Jesus? Well, during that time period a colt was a means of transportation and of course, it was also a valuable part of God’s creation. In this passage it functioned as the vehicle by which Jesus, who is the Good News of the Gospel, was going to be carried into the city of Jerusalem. Jesus didn’t need the colt, but Jesus chose to partner with the colt to accomplish God’s will because of his superabundant love for every created thing.

From the first chapter of Genesis to the last word in the book of Revelation we learn that God longs to be in relationship with all that God created, including you and me. God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God was with Israelites as they navigated their way through the desert. God appointed judges to protect and care for the Israelites. God empowered the prophets to bring God’s people back to himself. God has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us guiding us in this life and instructing us in ways of righteousness. God wants to be in relationship with all of creation. Because God desires to be in relationship with us God has chosen to work with and through creation to bring about God’s good purposes. Jesus didn’t have to have a colt, but he but he chose the colt as his vehicle by which the gospel itself would be carried into Jerusalem. The colt is the vehicle that takes Jesus into the city where he will be arrested, tried, will die on the cross, and will rise again... In the same way, God doesn’t need anything, but God, in love, chose to work with you and me. God has chosen to partner with us to bring about God’s good purposes on earth.

Jesus partnered with the colt to become the vehicle upon which he entered the city, Jerusalem. It is God’s deepest desire to be in relationship with us even though God doesn’t need anything, not even water! [Well, Luke and I did make it back from Cube Point, but with terrible headaches and a lesson learned: we need water.] In love, God has chosen to partner with us to become the vehicles by which the Good News of Jesus Christ is carried into the city, the city of Peoria, even though God does not need us. As we move into and through Holy Week, today through next Sunday, know that God has chosen you and you are the vehicle through which the love of Jesus Christ is carried to our city. So, transport this Good News to everyone you meet, inviting them to join us in celebration Easter Sunday as we gather in worship of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ. In the name of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. Amen.