

**Joke:** It was Palm Sunday but because of a sore throat, 5-year-old Annie stayed home from church with her mother. When the rest of the family returned home, they were carrying palm leaves. Annie asked them what they were for.

“People held them over Jesus’ head as he rode by on a colt,” her father explained.

“Wouldn’t you know it,” Annie fussed, “the one Sunday I’m sick and Jesus shows up and offers pony rides!”

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## **The Seventh Word from the Cross: The Disciples and The Donkey**

Matthew records the scene where the two disciples and the donkey are involved because Jesus told them to go retrieve it and bring it to Him. These guys likely had no clue what this simple task was about to fulfill in the grand scheme of the story God had been writing.

However, they trusted that Jesus knew what He was talking about and ended up following through with what Jesus asked them to do. The scene unfolds in Matthew 21 verses 1-11.

Mathew 21:1-11 (NIV) - As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **2** 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. **3** If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."**4** This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:**5** "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey. **6** The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. **7** They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. **8** A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.**9** The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the

Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”**10** When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” **11** The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

The two disciples and the donkey they brought to Jesus played a part in a grand parade into Jerusalem on what has become known as Palm Sunday.

They had no idea at that moment that their trust and follow through when Jesus said, “Go...” in verse 2, would lead to such events both in Jerusalem on this day and outside the walls of the city a week from then. Their simple act of trusting Jesus by following through led to significant moments that still are remembered today. For over two thousand years followers of Jesus have remembered the significance of Palm Sunday as the time when the donkey felt the weight of carrying Jesus into Jerusalem to initiate the Passion week.

I let me just say this church you may never know the impact of your yes may have on another person. But a

yes to God is worth every risk.

This beginning celebration would end with horror at the end of the week with the ultimate act of trust. Jesus would put His life into His Father's hands as He carried the weight of the world with the cross that was on His back. The last words of Christ from the cross we are looking at today are recorded in Luke 23:46.

Luke 23:46 - 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

When Jesus said those words and then breathed His final breath, it was as if a fuse got lit on a stick of dynamite that was about to blow the kingdom of darkness to smithereens.

When Jesus did what He did and said what He said on the cross, He then trusted all of what He had come from Heaven to earth to live and die for into the hands of His Heavenly Father. Jesus trusting His life and death into the

hands of His Father would make a way for you, me and the whole world to be in great hands all throughout the rest of eternity if we choose to trust in the same way.

Galatians 4:4–7 (NIV): But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

John 1:12 (NIV): Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Ephesians 2:11–19 (NIV): 11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—12 remember that at that time you were separate

from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,

Colossians 1:18–20 (NIV): 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his

fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

The gospel of Matthew gives some more specific details about what was put in motion when Jesus did and said those final things on the cross. The final act of trust that Jesus made on the cross was not an ending as much as it was a beginning.

Look how Matthew describes what started after Jesus' time, and life on the cross concluded in the end of Matthew 27 and beginning of chapter 28.

Matthew 27:50–61 (NIV): 50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. 51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split 52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and

appeared to many people. 54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" 55 Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. 57 As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. 58 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. 59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Let me pause here for just a moment because I want to talk about the significance of the veil being ripped in two. First you need to understand that the veil was probably about 30 feet long and over 4 inches thick.



So, tearing was an impossibility with human effort.

But I want to explain the significance beyond that.

While Jesus walked the earth, the temple in Jerusalem was the center of Jewish religious life. The temple was the place where the animal sacrifices were carried out and worship according to the Law of Moses was followed. In Hebrews 9 we are told that in the temple a veil separated the Holy of Holies—the earthly dwelling place of God's presence—from the rest of the temple where men dwelt. This signified that man was separated from God because of sin. And only the high priest was permitted to pass beyond this veil once each year to enter into God's presence for all of Israel to make atonement for their sins.

When Jesus died, the veil was torn, and God moved out of that place never again to dwell in a temple made with hands but now lives in His children by the Holy Spirit and we have become the temple of God as well as a royal priesthood.

What significance does this torn veil have for us in this 21st century? Mainly, that the tearing of the veil at the moment of Jesus' death symbolized that His sacrifice, the shedding of His own blood, was a sufficient atonement for sins. It signified that now the way into the Holy of Holies was open for all people, for all time, both Jew and Gentile.

Hebrews 10:19–23 (NIV): 19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

The veil in the temple was a constant reminder that sin made humanity unfit for the presence of God. The fact that the sin offering was offered annually shows us that sin could not truly be erased by mere animal sacrifices. Jesus

Christ, through His death, has removed the barriers between God and man, and now we may approach Him with confidence and boldness as a royal priesthood and child of God.

Now back to our story. . .

Jumping over to chapter 28 we read. . .

Matthew 28:1–8 (NIV): After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you

will see him.' Now I have told you." 8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

That is a lot of stuff that happened all because Jesus trusted and put His life in the hands of His Heavenly Father.

It all has to do with whose hands you are putting your life into with full trust.

Psalm 20:7 (NIV): 7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Proverbs 16:3 (NIV): Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

Jesus' final words on the cross are words expressing full trust. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" That is a powerful moment of trust when all the results of what happens next are put into the hands of someone else.

A scene from a famous basketball movie called Hoosiers starring Gene Hackman includes a scene of trust. This moment of trust is not a life or death moment; however, it helps illustrate how trust in one can impact many.

Gene Hackman's character becomes the head basketball coach of a little High School called Hickory in the state of Indiana where basketball is king. In Indiana basketball, all the schools are in one big playoff pool that decides who the state champion will be. This little school named Hickory makes an incredible run through the playoffs and makes it all the way to the state championship game against a powerhouse, an inner-city team that should dominate the game. But Hickory hangs in there and puts itself into a position to win the game. On the team, there is one great player named Jimmy Chipwood. Jimmy never misses when he shoots the ball. It always seems to go into the basket no matter the situation. And in this scene, the score is tied as the boys from Hickory steal the ball right at the end of the game and call a time out. When they get into the huddle, and the coach draws up a play to use Jimmy not as the guy to take the last shot, but as a decoy so that

somebody else can take the shot, the team feels a lack of trust in the success of that play. Jimmy Chipwood, with all the pressure of the moment, asks for the ball to be placed in his hands when he says, “Coach, I’ll make it.” The coach agrees and then runs a play to put the ball in Jimmy’s hands to either win or lose the game. As time is running out, Jimmy launches the shot from the top of the key on the court, and it goes in the basket as the clock hits “zero.”

When the game was on the line, and there was only one shot left to win state, they wanted the ball in Jimmy’s hands because they all trusted him the most.

It all has to do with whose hands you are putting your life into with full trust.

There is another that wants to tell their story of trust check it out. . .

**Show video: Disciples and the donkey ([www.skitguys.com](http://www.skitguys.com))**

And when Jesus was completing His part of the rescue mission of saving the world from sin, death, Satan, and hell, it was time to trust His Father with the rest. After Jesus did all He could do by coming from heaven to earth, being born of a virgin thirty three years earlier, living a completely sinless life although He was tempted in every way just like we are and yet never compromised, never cheated on his taxes, never slipped a peek at an inappropriate site online, never fudged on the truth, or had one too many and got a DWI in college or lied to His parents or did anything that would have disqualified Him from being the perfect, sinless sacrifice that would be worthy of making a complete and paid in full payment for all of our mess ups, hang-ups and sinful choices...He then put full trust of what He did into the hands of His Heavenly Father.

After Jesus went all the way to the cross and hung there for six hours starting at 9 am and wrapping up about 3 pm, He trusted His Heavenly Father. After fulfilling every one of the several hundred references and prophecies about the Messiah that had been recorded in the Old Testament and written over a thousand year period, Jesus then completed

His life by fully trusting it to His Father's hands. He transferred all trust with the last words from the cross: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last."

In that moment Jesus puts the proverbial ball in His Father's hands. Why?

Because He had full confidence that His Father would make the shot that not only would win eternity for everyone who puts the ball in His hands once and for all but also that His Father would be the one who would not let Him decay in a tomb. His Father's hands would be the hands that could raise Him back to life after being dead for three days.

Romans 5:19 (NIV): 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Jesus would never have gone to the cross if He did not have full trust concerning the sure-handedness of His



Father. Remember. . .

Luke 22:42 (NIV): 42 “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

It all has to do with whose hands you are putting your life into with full trust.

And Jesus had full confidence and trust that when He would breathe His last breath on the cross that His Father would not drop the ball. Jesus fully trusted that when He would be laid in a tomb and left there in the cold, damp, darkness where no light would be seen after the stone was rolled over the mouth of the tomb to seal Him inside that God the Father had a play drawn up that would hit nothing but net and would win the victory. Jesus trusted that His Father would once and for all defeat sin, death, Satan and hell from that point throughout eternity for all who would walk into the forgiveness and start a relationship with God through Jesus.

Jesus had full trust in His Father's hands. That's why Luke records these words:

“Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice...”

It wasn't some wimpy, uncertain, “I hope this is the right choice” kind of voice. It was loud. He was clear. There was no guesswork as to what Jesus was doing. He was doing just what He said He would do when it came to His life as He said the words recorded in John 10.

John 10:9–11 (NIV): I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

And then continues with verses 17 and 18. . .

John 10:17–18 (NIV): The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one

takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Jesus was saying, “I am the only way to heaven. The only way to eternity with God the Father is through Me. All roads don’t lead to heaven. I am the doorway into eternal life with God the Father.

On top of that, My Father in Heaven loves Me because I lay my life down. Nobody takes My life from Me. No Roman soldiers, no religious mobs, nobody takes my life from Me. I lay it down willingly into the hands of My Father in whom I fully trust.”

On the cross Jesus puts humanity’s salvation rescue mission from sin, death, Satan, and hell into motion when He says:

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”

Jesus was quoting a prayer with those last words on the

cross that Jews said at the end of their day. It was the part of a bedtime prayer that became a famous and regularly used prayer that originated from a Psalm that David wrote when he was on the run from King Saul.

Psalm 31:5 says,

Psalm 31:5 (NIV): Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.

It goes on to say in verses 15 and 16. . .

Psalm 31:15–16 (NIV): My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. 16 Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.

“Into your hands, I commit my spirit.”

Those were the words that Jews began to incorporate into their evening prayers on a daily basis. They were the words that were not used to start the day, but rather to end

the day. First century Jews had this thing about making sure they were in good hands when they were in an unconscious state during their times of sleep. They wanted to make sure that the last things they said to God had them in right standing and in good hands throughout the night until their alarm went off and the new start to a new day began.

Thus, they would end their day by praying their evening prayers that included: "Into your hands I commit my spirit."

In a sense, the prayer first century Jews would pray, and the prayer Jesus was praying on the cross before His final breath, are like the prayer that many people learned as kids.

"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake. I pray the Lord my soul to take."

Or... "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Jesus was putting the ball in His Father's hands. He was pushing all His chips into the middle of the table based on the kind of hand His Father had and was going to play that would raise Him back from the dead three days later.

Jesus laid down His life into His Father's Hands. It all has to do with whose hands you are putting your life into with full trust.

Whose hands are you putting your life into with full trust today?

Jesus laid down His life and put it right in the middle of His Father's hands. And His Father brought Him back to life on the third day that first Easter Sunday morning.

Today, if you are a follower of Jesus and you have put your life into His hands with full trust, He wants you to advance the story. The ball is in your hands to do something with it. Go and tell somebody this week.

If you have not put your life into the hands of your Heavenly Father yet, the question for you remains: “Whose hands are you putting your life into with full trust today?”

You can have a billion-dollar life insurance policy to ensure your family is taken care of, but that does not cover eternity.

Would you make the decision to put your life into the hands of Jesus with full trust today? His hands are strong hands. His hands can hold through anything you ever will face. His hands are the hands you want holding you up and whose hands you want to be holding at the end of your life when you breathe your last breath one day.

Today, if you have never put your life into God’s hands, would you pray the prayer Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father when He trusted and prayed those last words from the cross?

“Father, into your hands I commit My spirit!”