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Stop Dictating to Jesus How He Should Help You!

Reflections Prayer, Repentance and the Spiritual Life 18 September 2026

Mark 11:2

There is a beautiful, and at the same time very instructive, presentation doing the rounds about the crossing of the Red Sea. Do you suppose Moses doubted, even for a moment, that God would help him? Do you suppose he told God how to part the sea, so that the people might cross over safely?

We human beings have grown so accustomed to telling one another what to do, what to use, and how to do it, that we even tell God how to help us. What instruments of help Jesus might use, what methods He might adopt, what forces of nature — His own creation — He might deploy, cannot and should not be dictated to Him. Our bishop, preaching a sermon at Christ Church, Noida, not long ago, spoke of the donkey Jesus used for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to show that Jesus makes use, for His own purposes, even of ways and things that we, in our own judgement, might think unlikely. Though everyone present that day, and most who since have read that passage of the Gospel, wonder at His choice of transport, most miss His true message. He said, "Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him" (Mark 11:2).

That donkey had first to be released. Before you and I can be of any use to Jesus, the chains of our sin must be broken, and we must be set free, driving all evil from us, and allowing Jesus to rule our hearts.

That donkey had first to be redeemed. That little donkey was alive, and of use to the Lord, only because it had been redeemed by the innocent blood of Jesus Christ. Praise God, that is why we have life today; that is the only reason you and I are of any use to the Lord at all. Praise God for the redeeming power of the blood of Jesus!

That donkey had first to be ruled. Someone had to take charge of that donkey. The passage tells us it had never before been broken in for riding, yet it submitted itself to the Lord Jesus, and yielded to His control. It was not frightened by the crowds, nor by their noise; it surrendered itself to the Lord entirely. That is what Jesus asks of us — total submission, total surrender, total faith.

I have strayed a little from where I began. My point, however, is that Moses can hardly have imagined by what means he, and all who followed him, would be given their way of escape. And when the sea parted, I am sure he did not stand there trying to work out how it had happened. He crossed over without fear, because he trusted God without question. I recall being in conversation once with some people about Christianity, when someone brought up the crossing of the Red Sea, and demanded to know how it could have happened. The Lord may well have led them to a place where the sea was narrow. He might have used an earthquake, or a tsunami, or anything else besides. Like Moses, we need not trouble ourselves over what, or whom, Jesus will use to help us; we have only to trust that He will help us, and to be grateful for all His mercies, small and great.

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