

# Donkeys vs Horses - Being a Difference

by Sandeep Poonen

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*Sandeep Poonen's sermon encourages a reevaluation of our spiritual priorities through the lens of Jesus' choice to ride a donkey, emphasizing humility and a different definition of success in God's Kingdom.*

**Duration:** 59:05

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:4

**Topics:** "Faithful Service", "Spiritual Transformation"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being willing to serve God faithfully, even in seemingly small or humble ways, using the analogy of a donkey versus a horse. It challenges listeners to redefine success in terms of being transformed into the image of Jesus, rather than worldly achievements, and encourages them to discover and utilize their unique gifts for the benefit of the church and God's kingdom.

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## Transcript

This is my favorite part of the year, favorite thing to do in the year and this is the second year I'm doing this, so it's such a joy for me to be here. I cannot tell you enough how much it means. You can only understand it if you've been away from home for a while and you have to live in a foreign place and then you come back home.

You can go to many other places, but coming back home is something that is unique and there's a special feeling that you get in your heart, so I appreciate being able to be here and I hope that this weekend is something that will help us, take us to another level. A question that I always ask myself is, when we have these kind of camps and retreats, what is the reason that we have that, given all the things that we hear week in and week out? And it's a question that I think all of us need to ask ourselves and answer. What am I trying to get out of this weekend that I've taken the time and the effort and all of that to do that? There are three days going to be spent here.

Some of us probably have had to take vacation. I know I did. Some of you probably had to do it.

A lot of you might have had to do that. And what do you want to get here that you can't get on Sundays and Wednesdays? And I work in the business world, as a lot of you probably do if you're working. You work with companies that are trying to make money.

They're not just trying to do good for people. They're trying to do good too, but they're trying to make money. And you also have money which you need to live.

And when you pay money for something, you expect to get something in return. There's an economic value you're planning to get out of it. So there are significant costs that are included in this weekend.

First is accommodation, which is this facility. There's food, which you're well aware of. But there's also one other thing called opportunity cost.

And I don't know if all of you may know what it means, but let me explain it to you real quickly. Opportunity cost is often calculated by what you could be doing if you weren't doing this. Now, if I wasn't doing this, I would be working.

And I would be making money. So that money that I could have made, I am losing in order to be here. So in a way, that's a cost to me.

Are you following me? That's called opportunity cost. And I calculated it, not for me. I didn't include myself into this.

I didn't include the people who make lots of money, like maybe Robbie. I just picked him out of nowhere. I don't even know how much he makes.

But I took the average salary of how much somebody would make, and I kind of divided it by two to say, let's say 50% of you are not working. And I came out to this. I want you to take a look at this.

This is the total cost for this weekend. 2.75 lakhs is going to be spent by, I estimated, I think there were 55 people who said yes at some point. There may be a little bit more or not.

But based on what I calculated, there's 2.76 lakhs being spent from people sitting here. Does not include the people who've been organizing, not including people like me who's speaking. It's just everybody who's attending.

2.76 lakhs, which means that each of you, it's costing each of you 5,000 rupees, and it comes down to per person per hour, 100 rupees. Every hour you spend here is you're paying 100 rupees. That's the way you've got to look at it.

If you were to spend 100 rupees per hour on something, I hope you want to get something back out of it. And I think a lot of us tend to come to these conferences tend to come to these things, but don't realize that there's a huge cost that you are investing in it by coming to these retreats by coming to church every Sunday by claiming to be a Christian. Just an economic cost in any area of your life.

If you put that money towards anything, you'd expect something in return. My question then is, what are you getting in return for all these Sundays and Wednesdays you come into church? What is the return you're going to get out of this weekend? A wise man and a wise woman would be somebody who says, if I'm putting 5,000 rupees for this weekend, I don't think this is charging. If I'm spending 5,000 rupees for this weekend, it's still not.

Okay, so as they fix that, Robbie, can you try my maybe as you fix that I want I wanted to get to a little bit of a question time that I want you to write down the answer to this. Okay, so I want you to open your books to the middle page. And before you write anything down, I want to explain to you the rules.

Okay, because I want this to be useful, and I want it to be fruitful. So here's the rule. The two rules are absolute honesty and absolute privacy, which means that I want you to be honest in what you write down.

And I want to assure you that whatever you write down will be kept private in the sense that nobody will know what you wrote down. And this is how I want to keep those rules. This is how I want to do that, because I want you to fill out in this in your page, something that I want you to turn in.

And I want you to turn it in right now. Okay, so you're going to answer a question, but I put these rules up front so that you know that there's going to be absolute privacy. So I definitely don't want anybody writing down their name.

The only person who's going to be reading it is me, and I've put it down into a document. I'll type it all out into a document because I want us to document this question. Why am I here? So I want you to write that down, and I put it in block capital letters because it's easier to hide your handwriting if you write in block letters.

Don't try and write in all this cursive pretty writing that some of us can do. Write in block letters so that nobody can ever guess what it is. And the reason I'm saying that is because I want you to be honest.

This is not such a private question, but I still want you to be honest. And I want you to start the sentence off this way, and it doesn't have to be a long sentence. I came here because I can give you some potential answers.

I came here because my Christianity is slipping. Presently, I don't even know if I'm saved anymore, but I want to start again this weekend. That's an example.

Are you following me? I came here because I'm doing great spiritually, but I want to get better presently. I really love the Lord, but I want to get to know him closer in a deeper level. That's also an answer.

There's no right answer. There's no wrong answer. There's only your answer.

But I want you to write it down and turn it in. But I also want you to maybe write down a second time in your own notebook, wherever you want to write it and keep it. Keep it as something that you want to keep in front of you all weekend long.

So I want one copy to be turned in and the other copy to be kept for yourself. So do that right now. I came here, start the sentence with, I came here because something, something, something, then period.

Put a full stop. Next sentence, presently or currently, this is how I am doing, comma, and or but, I want whatever. Please, let's not write essays.

Let's try to be concise, but honest. So if you have to take more words, that's fine. I'll give you guys about two, three minutes.

If you need more time, just let me know. Yes, please. Yes.

For the one that you're going to turn in, use the center page so that you can tear it up. You don't have to use the whole both sides. So to speak, you can just use one of those two sides, tear it up, fold it in.

And we've got a plastic bag, you just dump it into the plastic bag as we pass it around. Please do not write your name. I'm not interested.

What do you specifically want you to do? I just want to get a sense of honestly, where are we? Where? What do you want? Are most of you struggling to know that you're saved? Are all of you already there? Do you want the Holy Spirit in a new way? Are you struggling to fight with a particular sin? You can be as specific or general as you want. As you're writing one other suggestion, try not to use overly Christian words like, I want to be righteous, I want to be sanctified, I want to be holy. Try to be honest.

Use simple English. If you're explaining it to a non-Christian, why are you coming here for this weekend? Remember to write it down a second time so that you can keep a copy of it. When you're writing it down for yourself, you can use your own words, you can use less, you can use more.

If you're taking a little longer, that's okay. I don't want to take up so much more time. But put it in there at the end or put it in whenever you're finishing it and we can just take care of it then.

I want you to keep the copy that you have with you. This is how you're going to assess. Maybe this week at the end of this weekend, maybe you have to look at this a month from now.

This is what you're going to look at to say, my investment, how much it cost for me to be here is worth it. And it may not be monetarily that floats your boat. It may not be the money that really gets you.

But at the end of the day, you guys have come here because you chose to be here. Nobody forced you to come. So this is just an exercise for you to get out of these three days what you want to get out of these three days.

If you set your standards low, you may have a better chance of getting it. If you set your standards high, you may also get that too. I'm not going to tell you what you need to get out of it.

You wrote it down. You check it out to see if you did get it at the end of the three days. So with that as an introduction, maybe what I'll do is we'll review this.

We'll maybe spend a minute or two reviewing this. But I would suggest you maybe review it. Maybe before you go to bed and when you wake up in the morning, review what you wrote down.

I came here because this is the reason why I'm here. Presently, I'm here. This is where I'm at.

I don't have much of a community with the people in my church, and I want to get closer to people in my church. That could be your answer. So you review it every day and say, this is why I came here.

So I'm going to try and work on this today. What I wanted to start off today was start off rather gentle. I don't want to go to fifth gear on the first day itself.

We'll warm up a bit. Tomorrow we'll hit a little bit more of the sessions. But I wanted to start today talking, I titled it Donkeys and Horses.

And I tend to work better when I see pictures. So I'm showing you here a picture of a donkey, and I'm showing you a picture of a horse. Did anybody need the help? Or would you have recognized it? I think the ears give it away.

The ears of a donkey give them away. Okay, so here's my next question. You don't have to write it down and hand it to me.

We can answer it out loud. What do you think of when you see a donkey? What do you think when you see a horse? I said write down your impressions, but you don't. You can just tell me what your impressions are when you see a donkey.

What are your impressions? What do you think of? Do you think ugly, beauty, hardworking, lazy, nice, hard to deal with, I want to have it, I really need to get one, I want it for Christmas. Anything, you can say anything. Okay, what is it? Okay, give me a second here.

What else? You can answer for either one. Okay, swift. What else? You can answer for both.

Being dumb. Yep. Hardworking.

I can't. Slave for donkey. Okay.

Hardworking for which one? Donkey. Yep. Horse is what? Hip.

Hip as in cool? Okay, hip, cool, slash graceful. Am I getting it right? Stubborn. Stubborn for, okay, I can almost guess.

Anything else? Stubborn with a horse too. Okay, anything else? How many of you want a donkey, how many of you want a horse? Anybody wants a donkey here for Christmas? How many wants a donkey in the next five years? How many of you would like to have a horse? I'm just going to say, much more desirable. How much, how many else? What about good looking versus ugly versus donkey is not so beautiful.

Most importantly, that's why none of us have them. It's not because we don't want them, it's because we can't afford them. Okay.

Have only one color. Okay, I'm running out of things. I got too many things about the horses.

Anything else that's really critical that you have to tell me about a horse that has not been said that you can't burning to tell me, I've always had this about the horses that was not been described here. You can earn money on a horse, that's a good one, I like that. Okay.

Swift, it's kind of under swift. Okay, I think I've got a good list. I'm going to save this.

I think it's pretty clear. I think it's pretty clear the difference between donkeys and horses. Donkeys not that desirable, it's dumb, slave, hardworking, good, stubborn, shabby and ugly.

The donkey is called a beast of burden. That's the phrase that's used to describe a donkey. Horses are very desirable.

The people of old used to race horses, even today, the Middle East people race horses for fun. And they pride themselves in who's got the best horse, who's got the best lineage of horses. A horse of a really good lineage for race horning can cost thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars or rupees or whatever it is.

These are not cheap animals. And for a reason, they're very, very highly prized. Now, I wrote this as a perspective, because I wanted to talk about what is going to be the subject of this weekend, and it's the last days.

I was not planning to speak on it, but I think after the terrorist attack that happened, I think this is what I felt like I wanted to speak on. Not because I'm thinking that you guys don't have much time left, or I have much time left, or anything like that, I don't know. But this is what I had when I thought about the last days.

I asked this question, what if you knew you had only one day left, one week left to live? Think about it. What if you had only one week left to live? What phone calls and emails would you make? Or write? What articles would you read on the internet? Or what articles would be like, you know what, I really don't need to read that. I've only got a week left to live.

It really doesn't matter what's happening. Whatever. What would you eat? That's kind of important.

I want to have one last, you know what I'd get, some sweets, or some chicken curry, whatever. I really need to have mom make this special meal for me. What would you spend your time with? Who would you spend your time with? Again, these are not questions that are trying to tell you that's what you should be doing all your lives.

It's just impossible to live that way. But what would you do if you had only one week to live? You know, we don't know how much time we have left, but there was one person who knew he had only one week left to live. Do you know who that was? Jesus.

Jesus knew that his time was running out and he had one week left to live. And he was introducing something so big that I re-read the last week of Jesus. Because I wanted to see what did he emphasize as I've spent 33 years on this earth and I've got one week left.

That's it. And then I'm done. And I looked at Jesus' last week to see if I could pick certain nuggets of what are some things that we have to keep as so essential as he was saying, listen, I've told you a lot of things, but please don't forget this.

And I've told you so many things, but don't forget to remember about this. One of those things that he says, he almost, I felt like he was underlining, saying one more time, can I just explain this concept to you? One more time, can I just tell you this? So I thought about the last week of Jesus and we know that the last week of Jesus, if you count the resurrection as being happening on a Sunday or whatever it is, the last week started with the time when he entered Jerusalem and what they call as Palm Sunday and people threw down their garments and he rode on a donkey. Now you see the correlation of why I said the donkey versus the horse.

Jesus rode on a donkey and he started to do different things. And I'm going to start, I'm going to concentrate primarily in Mark, the first few sessions and just pick nuggets here and there for you to, for us to toss around, for us to chew, for us to digest. And today is going to be very simple, but I want you to understand it.

I want you to toss it around and I want you to kind of chew on it later on as well. A little simple principle. And we all know the story, so I don't think I'm kind of really explaining something deep here.

We all know the story where Jesus came and he told his disciples, go and you'll find the colt tied up and go release it. And if anybody asks you, why are you doing this? You say that the Lord has need of him and they'll give you that colt right away. And you can read about it in Mark chapter 11.

So I recommend that you do read it. Maybe later today, maybe tomorrow morning. Read that passage.

But it's simple. There's a simple principle I'm trying to drive home from that just in this session. The Lord has need of a donkey.

Now, we described already that if we had our pick, we wouldn't pick a donkey over a horse. And I think it's significant in those days, especially even more than today. People didn't ride on donkeys.

You know, when people get married today, they don't drive in a beat up car. They try to get a nice car. They may not own that car.

They may have some friend who owns that car, but they borrow that car just so that they look nice and pretty on their wedding day. In the same way, when a king back then was entering after conquering or coming back after a victory, he wanted to show himself as a victor. He wanted to show himself as a king.

He didn't come in on a donkey. He came in on a horse. Or he came in on a chariot driven by horses.

So Jesus was doing something significant when he said, go get me a donkey. And it was intentional in the plan of God when God, when Jesus said, I am going to enter Jerusalem on a donkey. And all of the Israelites, all of the culture tells me that I need to ride on a horse in order to be recognized as a king and to be recognized as being the ruler of this new kingdom.

And I am a king and I am a ruler of a new kingdom, but I'm not going to ride on a horse. I'm going to ride on a donkey. And imagine the kind of response that the cultural people of Israel must have felt then.

They sang Hosanna, blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord. But they must have been wondering how it is kind of weird that this person who is going to introduce this new kingdom, who's been talking about this new kingdom, who's calling himself the son of God, is coming in on a donkey. And not a horse.

But yet, Jesus, I believe, was saying, the kingdom that I'm introducing here is not something that is going to be relevant to the earth's standards and will not measure up to the world's definition of success. The world's definition of success is ride on a horse. The world's definition of a donkey is dumb, cheap, stupid, ugly.

And Jesus is saying, I'm not going to fit into what the world tells me is relevant and what is great. I'm establishing a new way in which the kingdom of God is going to be expressed. Completely different.

So here's another question. All of us, I hope, and whether we like it or not, all of us are trying to be a success. How many of you want to be successful? Okay, I had too many hands up, so I'll ask the question differently.

How many of you want to be a failure? Nobody wants to be a failure. Okay. How many of you can say you are being successful? Now, I'm not saying what success is.

You can say success is to be a great teacher. And maybe that's your success in life. I'm not saying success is by the way the world says it.

I'm saying success is by the way you've defined it. How many of you can say I am being successful? Why do you say you're being successful? Because you based on your definition of success. Okay, what is your definition of success? And if you achieve these goals, you say you're being successful.

Anybody else? Selvam, did you raise your hand? Okay. You're being successful. Anybody else? There's no right or wrong answer here.

It's an important question though for you to answer. Believe me, it's a very important question because if you don't know what you are trying to be successful at or you don't know how you're going to define success. You're going to be like a ship without any direction.

And I'm not speaking as being a Christian. I'm just speaking just to get on in life. If you want to get anywhere in life, you might want to plan on having some goals.

For example, if you want to get married, but you maybe speaking most of the men here. Yeah, if you're planning to get married, but you don't have a job. I would suggest that you're not going to be very successful in getting married to the person you need to get married to.

Because as a man, one of the things we should be looking to is saying, can I take care of my family? Now, if you don't want to get married, and you don't consider that to be an object of success. If you don't have to get a job. Are you following me? Okay.

Let me tell you something. I'm not discarding. I have achieved certain levels of success.

All of us achieve certain levels of success. If you've gone past first grade, you've achieved success. If you've gone to second grade, you've achieved success.

I've achieved success in school to a certain level. Not as much as the people who have gotten masters or PhDs. But I've achieved success at the college level.

I've achieved certain amount of success at work. That's why they pay me. Because apparently I'm doing something that they like that they give me money.

But I have come to see that for me at least, there is only one definition of success. In the overarching scope of things. And I want to share it just with you.

Not that you have to copy it down and write it down. Because I said it, you have to adopt it. But I'm just sharing with you what I feel I have defined what success in my life is.

I want to be successful in this way. And this is the goal I am trying to achieve. And having understood that definition of success, it has given me two things.

It has given me a purpose in which to go. And it has also freed me from so much insecurity and guilt and burdens. That is why I shared with you.

Please don't adopt it if you're not interested in adopting it. But answer the question. What does it mean to be a success in your life? You must write it down later on in the evening when you've got time.

Over the weekend, what does it mean for me to say, successful, good job, done. And I'm going to answer that with two scriptures that have come alive to me. And these two scriptures have told me what my goal is and hence how I can gauge success.

I can gauge success this way. Because in 2nd Corinthians 3, he talks about the spirit. The Lord is the spirit.

And where the spirit is, there's liberty. And we, but we with unveiled face. Because in the Old Testament, I couldn't see Jesus clearly.

That's what 2nd Corinthians 3 is talking about. He's saying, you know, in the past, in the Old Testament, all these stories about Elijah, David, they couldn't see Jesus face to face. But we with unveiled face can look straight at the glory of the Lord, which is Jesus.

And we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. So my definition of success is this. Am I being transformed more into the image of Jesus? And so my question at the end of December 31st, 2008 is, am I transformed more into the image of Jesus than I was on January 1st? From one level of glory to another.

If I have been transformed, the answer is yes, you have been a success in this in 2008. Even if my stock portfolio went down, even if I lost my job, even if I still haven't gotten married, even if whatever else hasn't happened, if I am being transformed into the same image, I am being successful. And let me tell you why I say that also with another verse.

When everything finishes on this earth and either we die or Jesus returns, there's one thing that's going to happen. We will be like him because we will see him just as he is. As much as we see him in a mirror and we can look at him through a mirror.

One day we will see him completely as he is. Everyone who has this hope. If you want to be like Jesus being transformed into his image from glory to glory, then we work on ourselves now.

Then I rate my success based on am I purifying myself as he is pure. So the most important thing about whether you were successful is not whether you got married or whether you had children or you bought that house or whether you finished that degree. That's good and I don't get me wrong.

I'm not trying to discourage you from all those other earthly goals that we have in order to do something in order to support our family. But beyond all of that, beyond all of that, can I suggest that consider this as a goal. That the goal that God created us, he predestined, Romans 8 says, that we may be conformed into the image of his son.

Maybe I should have had that verse up here too, because he created us in advance. He predestined us means in advance. He created us with an idea of what it would mean.

Finally, when we were all done, he said, here's this thing I'm going to be creating in the womb, but that's where I want him to end up. And womb was that person, but end up is to the image of Christ. That's the goal that we can be sons and daughters, just like Jesus is a son of God in completeness.

So what must we become sons and daughters in completeness? And so we go through life and I say, God, don't take me out of this earth until I am transformed from one image of glory to another. Not

because I want to have children before I die. Not because I want to be old enough to see my grandchildren.

Not because I want to go and see 50 countries before I die. Not because I want to go see the Taj Mahal or whatever it is before I die. No, because I want to be most conformed to the image of Jesus before I die.

Because I know that when he appears to me, because when either I go to be with him or he comes back to take me, I know that when he appears, I'm going to be like him because I will see him just as he is. And this is my only chance to work on getting better. To be more like him.

To be more like him. From one image of glory to another. And do I have to work and work and work and squeeze it out? No, you've heard this too many times.

I think as Jesus has become more and more beautiful to me, the more I want to be like him. And the more this drive becomes bigger and bigger in me because being like Jesus takes on a bigger and bigger view. It takes on a bit more, more.

It becomes more and more significant to me. And maybe that's where some of us are struggling is that being like Jesus is not that enticing just yet. And I don't know if that's an easy problem to solve.

But I can't explain how that happened to me. I shared a little bit of it last in the last conference. So I just held on.

I didn't give up. And I say, God, I don't see you. As I want to see you.

And also there was pride in me. There was selfishness in me that kept me from achieving those goals. And God had to work on the big things first.

Before I could be gripped in a way that I needed to be gripped. And I think we can try and be like Jesus purifying himself as he's pure and make it such a dead, endless work. Or it could be something that is so desirable to me.

And when I read this verse. And I say, everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself. I'm excited about it.

I really am. Because I want to be conformed to the image of Jesus. There is nothing that is more important to me.

And I tell you, this world tells you otherwise. You pick up the newspapers. And for me who follows sports, people like Tiger Woods is very big.

He seems to be successful. Cricketers like Dhoni. Very successful.

And it's so easy to say, if only I could have been like him. If only I could have his life. It would be such a good life.

When I hear about him building this huge house with so many rooms. I'm like, oh, if only I could be like him. Or something else.

Or somebody else. Or Bill Gates. If I had this much money, man, it would be so cool.

And secretly I have these desires that want to be like somebody on this earth. And that's maybe where some of those problems start to arise. Where we start to go off track.

But as I keep Jesus as the most beautiful thing worth emulating and being like. Purifying ourselves as he is pure is something that is not difficult. I'm not saying that it doesn't come through suffering and trials and all of that.

But I truly believe that if we have found the commandments of Jesus to be burdensome and hard. We are not dealing with the right Jesus. We're looking at an incomplete version of Jesus.

Because Jesus said, if you come to me and you're weary and heavy laden, I'll give you rest. And my burdens are light. And for years, I am speaking to you because for years the burdens of God were heavy.

And the yoke of God was not easy. But I stand here and I speak. Driving this again and again and again.

Year in, year out. That there must be that Jesus that we all grab on to. Because there's a Jesus that I seem to have my eyes open to.

Where his burdens are easy and his yoke is easy and his burdens are light. It comes with suffering. It comes with the way of the cross.

It comes with me dying to myself. But I get conformity to the image of Jesus. And that trade off is such a no brainer for me.

To give up my own will to my wife. To not say something mean to her, to my wife at a time when she provokes me. To shut up and say nothing.

Becomes easy because, not because I don't have a couple of smart words I want to get back at her with her to it. But because I value conformity with Jesus. And that shapes how I respond.

And that shapes how I work. And that shapes what I do in my free time. And that shapes where I go on the internet.

And that shapes what kind of music I listen to. All of these things get shaped because conformity to the image of Jesus and to be enamored with Jesus takes on a bigger and bigger view. So that my goal becomes, I want to be just like he is.

For myself, and I'll tell you why I'm getting into it with the donkey and the horse here with this. In the success of life. Many of us have definitions of success.

Some in the Christian world, in our Christian ministry that we think, oh I want to be like this. For me that's the case that I had to deal with it. But for you it may be in the world.

We have definitions of success that look more like a horse than a donkey. And Jesus when he was starting his last week, he said, I am going to sit on a donkey. I'm not going to look that pretty, but I'm going to get the kingdom established.

And this is what I mean by it. I'll explain it to you with my own story about what I had to deal with. What I have to deal with.

One of the things that as I started to understand what my gift is, is to be able to teach. One of the horses in my life was I said, God I want to be successful as a teacher. I want to teach your word.

And God created opportunities for me to speak in public places into a lot of people's lives and to in big venues and lots of attention venues with famous people. Nothing wrong with that. And I said, God, let's keep on going.

Let's keep this horse. This horse is starting to look real good. And I felt like God was telling me, what if I took that horse away? What if I told you to preach to 10 people? What if I dried up all your speaking gigs, which he did? Not completely, but none of these big, fancy, cool preaching engagements.

Not as much as I'd like to have had. I said, God, what's wrong? I thought I have this gift. We're supposed to be successful.

And he said, you have to redefine success. And you've got to throw out some of the horses that you think you need to come riding on proclaiming Jesus as King. And say, there's a donkey on which you're going to have to start riding on.

You got to throw out some of those horses that you think is the way Jesus can use you in your life. And the reason I also say that is because you discard the donkeys. It's a double-edged sword because I get caught up with the horse, but I also ignore the donkey.

In my case, this is what it was. God challenged me to say, I've given you a teaching gift. That means you can teach.

But who said that teaching only happens when you speak? You can also teach when you write. And so God said, would you be faithful to write every week, every month? Some for other people to see and a lot for nobody to see. But God said, would you be faithful with that donkey I'm giving you? Because I'm going to come riding in on a donkey.

I'm not going to come riding on this beautiful, majestic, desirable horse. And I see other people, other young men, other men my age who got churches where 7,000 people listen to them and their sermons are the most downloadable. And I'm like, that's a cool horse.

And God says, I've got donkeys for them. You don't worry about them. The donkey for you is, you write.

And nobody's going to praise you when you write. Nobody's going to say, wow, what a great sermon. Nobody's going to applaud you.

In America, they applaud you when you finish sermons. Nobody's going to applaud you when you write. It's just going to keep on writing.

And I've got a couple, a few Microsoft Word documents where I'm writing. Who knows if anybody will ever see them. But I'm writing because I'm being faithful to ride on that donkey that God says, write on it.

This is where the rubber hits the road for you. There's no point us being in church if we don't start to be useful to the Lord. And when you start doing certain things, when you come for a retreat weekend, a lot of times, if people ask you, why are you doing it? The response will be, the Lord has need of it.

And the Lord has need of each of you. The Lord has need of each of you. Believe me.

That's the reason he created us. For us to worship him, but also for us to fulfill a purpose. I wonder if some of us are in one of two camps, both of which are wrong.

Some of us are in our camp which says, I don't want anything. I don't want a horse or I don't want a donkey. I want neither.

I just want to sit and I want to listen and I want to go home and I want to come back and I want to sit and I want to listen and I want to come back. That's an insult. That's an insult to God.

That's an insult to the people who are speaking to you. That's an insult to the time you're spending here. Sit at home.

Don't come. It really is pointless. I mean, you're wasting a lot of money.

The opportunity cost is huge. You shouldn't do that. The reason you come is because you were meant to be useful.

So some of us need to know, I need to get on an animal. I need to start using an animal to be useful to God. Others of us need to correct some of the perceptions we have had about how God could use us.

We thought that we need to have this particular way in which God could use us. Oh God, as soon as I get married, then I'll start working for you and I'll start having a Bible study in my home. That's when I'll start helping other people.

Beautiful horse is, I want to get married first. Then I'll be useful to you, Lord. Can you just work helping teach a Sunday school class? No, that's a donkey, God.

Let me get married first. Horse. God says, I'm going to ride in and I don't need a horse.

I just need a donkey. I need a donkey to ride in. In fact, I don't want a horse.

Oh God, just give me this next promotion. Then I'll give up some of my time that I'm working so hard at my job and invest some of that with these kids who are struggling. Just give me that next promotion.

This beautiful horse. God says, I want you to start working right now in my community and other people. The horses are spiritual things.

God, please help me to get over this big thing that I'm dealing with spiritually. Help me to get here. Then I'll start serving.

God says, I don't care what it looks like. If it's dumb, if it's a slave, if it's stubborn, if it's shabby and ugly, if it's cheap, if it's just brown and gray. All I talk about every time is, I don't know how to explain it, but I just know that Jesus loves me.

I can't get up and share that because it's the same old limited color donkey. And all these other people share and it's great horses. They have all these 10 different verses and I keep referring to the same two verses that I know.

So I'll just sit. I'll just sit at the back and say nothing. Jesus is coming riding in on a donkey.

And the pretty ways, the pretty sermons, the cool PowerPoints, not that relevant. Believe me, the simple love for Jesus. It's not so attractive, not so beautiful, but maybe hardworking.

Maybe got big ears, it's all sticking out, all funny looking. But I'm going to carry Jesus in. Is that appealing to anybody? And some of us sit year after year, come to camp after camp and we need that next level.

We need to be successful. We need to be moving towards being successful in our goal to being like Jesus. And some of us have to stop looking for trying to be all pretty like a horse before we can carry Jesus in.

We have to start with wherever we're at. And all of us are donkeys in our own ways. Our spirituality is messy.

Our spirituality is broken. Our faithfulness to him is so spotted and freckled. We fall and we get up and we fall and it seems like we're falling more than we're getting up.

But we're trying. There's not much to look at. And I say, God, I'm going to come to you and I'm going to bear you.

I'm going to carry you in. That is only going to get appealing to people to whom Jesus is somebody special. That the worth of carrying Jesus in becomes somebody special.

So to serve in church, to work in ministries in the church, to help the young people, to help somebody who's younger than you, to fellowship with other people in need, those are things that only become valuable when you see what Jesus has to gain from it, not what you have to gain from it. Jesus is coming riding in, not you. You will continue to be maybe broken for a long time.

I stand up here broken in so many ways. But I know that I love him. That's a non-negotiable.

You cannot convince me that I don't love him. And you can't convince me that he doesn't love me. And it is on the basis of those two things that I say, I'm a donkey, I have limited resources, I have limited stuff, but I'm going to stand up.

And I have only two questions for you to qualify, for you to stand up here and speak, for you to teach other people and speak is, do you know he loves you? Do you know that you love him? Are you honest about it? And you're ready to bear that king in. That has to be something that drives you to not only be faithful in your private life, but also fulfill the purpose. I have gotten, and I only share this because I've gotten such a deep level of security after I've understood what God created me and God showed me some of the gifts I had to give other people in the church.

And you are seriously hamstringing, you're seriously limiting your potential and your ability to be a success as a Christian if you don't uncover what your gifts are. And you don't uncover what you could be useful for to the church. If you're not being used in the church, you're seriously limiting your Christian walk.

I only say that as somebody who has seen how God has blessed me in my own personal walk as I said, God, I want to stand up in my brokenness and give to other people. What has he given me? Money? No, he's given me his grace. He's given me Jesus to be more beautiful.

So I want you to write this down. You don't have to write it down now. We've run out of time.

But I want you to say, God, what are the horses that may be in my life? I've been waiting till I'm like this before I start doing that. What is that donkey where you're currently at that the Lord needs you? Is it that you can teach first graders? That's how you can carry the Lord and do that? Is it by playing music? Is it by playing with other people? Is it by spending time with them on a Friday evening? I don't know what it is. It's definitely not that glamorous.

I can tell you that it's not something great and fancy. It's a lot of times. It's something very simple.

So let's pray. Let's bow our heads real quick and pray. Ask the Lord to just be with us this weekend.

Father, I pray that you would be with us. I pray that you may open blind eyes. Lord, you've done this when you came onto this earth.

You open blind eyes. And we are all blind in different levels. We don't see you as clearly in a mirror and that may be that's the reason why we are having so much problems is because we don't see you clearly in the mirror.

We don't see the magnificence the beauty. And and the charm of you and being like you Lord. I pray that you may open our eyes Lord.

We want to lay down everything else on the altar and be willing to sacrifice everything. We have all of our other goals for what you claim to be the pearl of great price, which is being like you which is being with you and being like you and having you in us. Lord, I pray that everyone here would be gripped with that not would understand it in their minds, but really wrap their hearts around it.

Lord, I desire that Lord for us young people as we are going to be asked to carry that torch after the elders have done their part. We will have to be ready. We will have to be fit to carry that torch Lord and we need a lot of work.

We need to do a lot of things in order to be worthy to carry that torch open our eyes open the eyes of our heart Lord. You can do this. Give us willing hearts and a fertile soil in Jesus name.

We pray.

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