

[Genesis 22:1-14](#)
[Psalm 13](#)
[Romans 6:12-23](#)
[Matthew 10:40-42](#)

Are you a Donkey or a Lamb?

Help us to show up for our work to do.
Guard our hearts against despair.
Keep us Kind and Stubborn.ⁱ

Did you know that there are more than 40 million donkeys in the world? Genus named *Equus africanus asinus*, found in mostly in developing countries, they are used principally as [draught](#) or [pack animals](#).ⁱⁱ

What do you know about donkeys?

First, they are a part of the horse family.
Second, if you are thinking “all I know is the Word Jack Ass comes from donkeys”- you are correct.
A male donkey is called a jack ass or jack, did you know that female donkeys are called jenny’s?

Third, mules are when a male donkey and a horse are cross bred.

Donkeys are famous for being faithful, load bearing, stubborn animals.

Remember Eeyore- the slow-moving, wise speaking, often glum donkey of Winnie the Pooh?

Remember the Donkey in Shrek? Faithful side kick, sassy, and speaking truth despite his best friend is an ogre (Able to squash him a in a second?)

You may be thinking about political parties, the democratic donkey- did you know that the donkey was affiliated with the party after Andrew Jackson was called a Jack Ass, rather than refute it as an insult, he embraced the image and it's qualities of stubbornness and faithfulness. ⁱⁱⁱ

AND

The bible is full of donkeys. LITERAL Donkeys. (Well, and some figurative ones too.)

Faithful, load bearing, stubborn people and donkeys.

Did you know that the bible mentions Donkeys nearly 100 times?

Whenever someone is called to move, they load up their donkeys. (not saddle up your horses)

Samson is compared to being like a wild ass

There is Balaam whose donkey actually speaks to him.

Mary and Joseph travel by donkey to Bethlehem
The donkeys at the stable at Jesus' birth
Jesus requires a young donkey (depending on your translation) to ride into
Jerusalem.

And today.

Today, Abraham takes a donkey with him to carry the wood to go with
Isaac up the mountain.

Faithful, load bearing for the master, stubborn.

When I read the readings for today I stopped at "Abraham said to his
young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there;"
My heart and my soul cried out.

I just want to wait with the donkey, too.

You and I both know where this story is going.

We know the "God why on earth would you ask such a thing?"

"What on earth were you thinking Abraham?!"

We cringe in the moment of innocence with Isaac who trusts his father and
lets himself be bound.

We, too, are faithful . . . We know the moment of relief will come with God
interrupting Abraham and providing the lamb for the sacrifice.

I am not going to lie, I want to stay behind with the donkeys and avoid this whole story.

I want to pretend it didn't happen. I want to skip over it.

The questions of why why why repeat and echo in our hearts and our brains.

And yet, even Eeyore would remind us, "A little consideration, a little thought for others, makes all the difference."

Donkey from Shrek would tell us "Abraham, you jack ass, you need to listen"

If we stayed with the donkeys and the young men

..... we would miss the miraculous moment of provision of the lamb.

If we avoided the difficult stories we would miss the moments of deep healing through the seemingly impossible.

Now a point of clarity,

Donkeys are not passive in the bible.

The donkeys in the bible carry so much.

They in themselves are God bearers

- bringing people and all their baggage to where God is calling them.

They very rarely stand still and when they do, it's holding steady for when their masters return.

They listen and are always companions on the way.
Right beneath, beside, along with their masters.

And ultimately it is a donkey who brings the lamb of God into Jerusalem.

Jesus talks about the lion and the lamb lying down in peace with each other in the kingdom of heaven.

Personally, I think it's the donkey and the lambs.
We all have a bit of faithful stubbornness in us that has to be still.
We all want to be the kind, gentle, cute lambs and the reality is that we are the donkeys.

We are faithful and stubborn.
Sometimes for the best reasons
and sometimes we miss the boat and are stubborn for all the wrong causes.

And God uses the donkey and the lamb in each of us.
God welcomes each part of us into community and expects us to do the same.

Eeyore was just as much a part of the Winnie the Pooh community as Christopher Robin.

The Donkey in Shrek was as much an outward conscience to Shrek as Jiminy Cricket was to Pinocchio.

There are over 40 million Donkeys in the world today because they are faithful, reliable, sturdy and go the distance.

Today we sit in the in between of holidays- Juneteenth and Independence Day.

Both important days in our history as a country.

Festivities abound on both days.

Both holidays remind us sharply of the road that we, as a community, have to travel and the work that we still have to do.

Both remind us of sacrifice and being bound up, the need for freedom and transformation.

We have to work with our baggage alongside of us.

Moments when we, like Abraham, thought we were following God's will only to be interrupted and shown the better way.

Moments when we knew better and should have acted better.

Moments where we say "We welcome you" and simultaneously slam the door in someone's face at the same time.

Moments where we must remember that our citizen ship does not lie within a party that has a donkey or elephant as a mascot.

Rather, our citizenship lies within in god's kingdom that reaches beyond political parties.

Reaching even us in our stubbornness.

Reaching us when we forget to look for the lamb in the midst of challenging times.

Reaching us when we feel like we are less than loveable and inviting us into a community.

Inviting us to see others' stubbornness and faithfulness as a space for love and community to invite into rather than avoid.

Providing us welcome just as we are.

Expecting us to share the same abundance of welcome rather than hoard it for ourselves.

We are all donkeys.

Oodles of us, ordinary, creatures of God.

Ready to be companions.

Open to walk beside each other

Ready to do as the Lord requires.

How will you this week show your faithfulness, steadfastness and companionship to build up the kin-dom of god?

How will you walk through the hard times and strive towards building a community of love

How will you strive towards better rather than accepting what is now?

How will you have grace with the person you encounter along the way?

The answer my friends, is “with God’s help” just like we say at baptism.

We will with God’s help

One story at a time.

One person at a time

One Donkey at a time.

ⁱ Sarah Bessey

ⁱⁱ Yes, googling was quite fun on this subject matter. My esteemed sources were <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donkey>

ⁱⁱⁱ Who knew, right? <https://www.history.com/news/how-did-the-republican-and-democratic-parties-get-their-animal-symbols>