

Unusual Thanksgivings

I Thess 5:18

Edward Church

**November 16,
2025**

**Thankful for
Donkeys and
Detours
Num 22:21–31**

What He Said...

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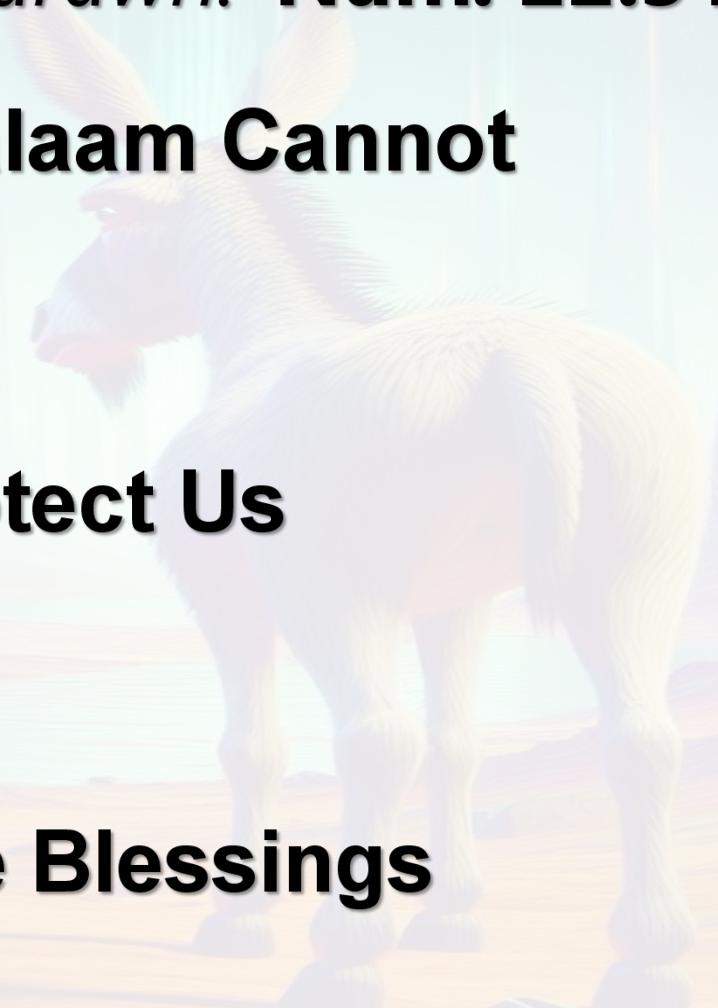
Balaam's Donkey Sees What Balaam Cannot

Can We See....

• **God Uses Detours to Protect Us**

and

• **Sometimes Interruptions Are Blessings**



NO in all these things
WE MORE
CONQUERORS than
LOVED that
IS THROUGH HIM

Have you ever been stopped in your tracks by something that felt like an inconvenience — a flat tire, a missed flight, a closed door —

- Realized Later It Saved You ?


Have you ever been stopped in your tracks by something that felt like an inconvenience — a flat tire, a missed flight, a closed door —

- Realized Later It Saved You ?

Balaam thought his Donkey was Stubborn...
...but she was his Salvation.

- God sometimes speaks through the Most Unlikely Voices and Saves Us Through the Most Frustrating Detours
- This Thanksgiving, We're Going to Learn to Thank Him Not Just For The Blessings We Expect, But for the Interruptions We Resent

- “Have you ever been stopped in your tracks by something that felt like an inconvenience — a flat tire, a missed flight, a closed door — only to realize later it saved you from something worse?”
- Balaam thought his donkey was stubborn, but she was his salvation.
- God sometimes speaks through the most unlikely voices and saves us through the most frustrating detours.
- This Thanksgiving, we’re going to learn to thank Him not just for the blessings we expect, but for the interruptions we resent.”

A photograph of three turkeys in a grassy field. The turkeys are in the center of the frame, facing slightly to the right. They have dark, iridescent feathers and prominent red wattle. Their tails are fanned out. In the background, there is a wooden fence and some trees. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

SOMETHING'S UP

**THE FARMER JUST UNFRIENDED
ME ON FACEBOOK**

Thanksgiving is Usually About the Obvious Blessings —

- **Family**
- **Food**
- **Health**
- **Provision**

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**Scripture Reminds us that Sometimes the Greatest Reasons for...
...Gratitude Come from the Most *Unexpected Places***

- **It's a Strange Story — but it's Also a Thanksgiving story.**
- **Because Sometimes We Need to Be Thankful for the...
...Donkeys and Detours God Sends to Save Us**

- **"Thanksgiving is usually about the obvious blessings — family, food, health, provision. But Scripture reminds us that sometimes the greatest reasons for gratitude come from the most *unexpected places*.**
- **In Numbers 22, Balaam is on his way to curse Israel for profit. He's riding his donkey, blind to the danger ahead. Suddenly, the donkey sees what Balaam cannot — the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword. Three times the donkey detours, and three times Balaam beats her. Finally, God opens the donkey's mouth, and she speaks.**
- **It's a strange story — but it's also a Thanksgiving story. Because sometimes we need to be thankful for the donkeys and detours God sends to save us."**

WHAT
ARE YOU
THANKFUL
FOR?

VEGETARIANS



Balaam was a Man

- of God
- Misguided
- Balaam was Blinded by His Own Ambition (21).
- The Donkey Saw the Angel of the Lord (23).
- Three Detours: into a Field, Against a Wall, Lying Down (23–27)
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Balaam was a Man

- **of God**
- **Misguided**
- **Balaam was Blinded by His Own Ambition (21).**
- **The Donkey Saw the Angel of the Lord (23).**
- **Three Detours: into a Field, Against a Wall, Lying Down (23–27)**
 - **It Seems the It was Balaam was the Stubborn One**
 - **Balaam Beat the Donkey, but She was Saving Him**
 - **God Opened Her Mouth (28) and Balaam's Eyes (31)**

God has chosen

the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.

1 CORINTHIANS 1.27 KJV



Donkeys

God Speaks Through Unlikely Voices

Balaam's Donkey Spoke Truth...

...When Balaam Was Blind to the Truth

- 1 Cor 1:27 amp— But God has selected [**for His purpose**] the foolish things of the world to shame the wise [**revealing their ignorance**], and God has selected [**for His purpose**] the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong [**revealing their frailty**].

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Story

- **1977 New York blackout → revival in a Brooklyn church.**
 - **Edward Spencer rescued 17 from a shipwreck**

Application:

- **Who are the “Donkeys” in Your Life?**
- **Do You Ever Overlook Who God Uses to Speak?**

• Story -Blackout

In 1977, the New York blackout plunged the city into chaos. Looting and fires broke out. Yet in Brooklyn, one small church lit candles and opened its doors. Neighbors poured in, frightened and restless. The pastor preached by candlelight, and dozens gave their lives to Christ. Out of the “donkey” of a blackout came revival.

• Story - Edward Spencer

Edward Spencer, a Northwestern student, rescued 17 people from a sinking ship in 1860. He was badly injured and never regained full health. Years later, at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the 17 ever came back to thank him.

Like Balaam’s donkey, God’s instruments often go unrecognized.

Detours God's (Redirections) Story

- **Titanic crewman reassigned → Life spared**
- **Corrie Ten Boom's fleas: protection in disguise**
 - **God's Detours Are His Protection**
- **Proverbs 16:9 – “*The Lord establishes his steps*”**
 - **Isaiah 30:21 – God redirects our path**
 - **Application:**

Detours may feel frustrating...
...but they are often God's protection

- **Proverbs 16:9**, *"The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."* **Balaam had his plan, but God rerouted him.**
- David Blair (1874–1955) was a British merchant seaman with the White Star Line. He had been appointed as **Second Officer of the RMS Titanic** during her fitting out / sea trials in Belfast in early April 1912. Blair knew the ship well, having overseen her preparations / test runs. He was proud to be part of what was then the largest/ most luxurious ship in the world. But just days before Titanic's maiden voyage, made a last-minute reshuffle of officers. Chief Officer Henry Wilde, who had been serving on Titanic's sister ship *Olympic*, was transferred over to Titanic to take a senior role. To make room, Blair was reassigned to another vessel. He was **devastated** — he had been preparing for months, missing the historic voyage felt like a crushing disappointment. a detour he resented — had **saved his life**. He lived until 1955, long enough to reflect on how a bitter disappointment became his salvation. **Corrie ten Boom once thanked God for fleas in her concentration camp barracks. Because the guards refused to enter the flea-infested room, allowing the women to hold Bible studies in peace. What looked like a curse-blessing**

**NO DISCIPLINE IS
ENJOYABLE WHILE IT IS
HAPPENING-IT'S PAINFUL!
BUT AFTERWARD THERE
WILL BE A PEACEFUL
HARVEST OF RIGHT LIVING
FOR THOSE WHO ARE
TRAINED IN THIS WAY.**

HEBREWS 12:11



Thankful for God's Disruptions (Interventions)

- **Hebrews 12:11 — discipline feels painful, but it protects.**



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- **Hebrews 12:11 — discipline feels painful, but it protects.**

Story

- **WWII Platoon Saved By Broken Antenna**

Application:

God's Interventions May Hurt, But They Save



WWII Platoon and the Broken Antenna

- During World War II, a platoon of Allied soldiers was advancing through enemy territory. Their radio antenna snapped unexpectedly, forcing them to stop and repair it.
- While halted, scouts discovered that they were just minutes away from walking into a deadly ambush.
- The broken antenna — a frustrating delay — had saved their lives. What felt like a nuisance was actually a shield.



**When You Sit At the Table This Thanksgiving,
Don't Just Thank God For the Turkey and the Pie.**

- **Thank Him For the Donkeys that Spoke...
...Even When You Wouldn't Listen**

- **Thank Him for the Detours that Kept You From Disaster**

- **Thank Him for the Interventions that Hurt But Healed**

- **Because Gratitude Grows Deepest Not in the Obvious Blessings
Come
in the Unexpected Places**



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 - <http://edwardnc.org/ecc/2025>
- Our Site:
 - <http://ecc.edwardnc.org>
 - See the calendar page for
 - updates,
 - links, and
 - more