

Personal Responsibility

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of preparing for Christ's coming by getting like Him, being meek and lowly, and being willing to serve Him with humility and obedience.

Scripture: Matthew 21:1

Topics: "Personal Responsibility", "Christ as King"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the theme of personal responsibility in the context of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, contrasting it with the worldly displays of power and glory. He illustrates how Jesus, in His humility, chose a lowly donkey for His procession, symbolizing His approach to kingship through love and sacrifice rather than through cruelty and pride. Simpson calls believers to recognize Christ as their King, urging them to accept His claim over their lives and to respond to His call for service. He stresses that each individual has a unique role in God's kingdom and that the Lord has need of them to prepare for His coming. Ultimately, he encourages a deep, personal relationship with Christ, who desires to reign in the hearts of His followers.

Transcript

There were few in these days of our Lord who had not either seen or heard of a Roman triumphal procession, or witnessed on a smaller scale the pageants of Herod; and they had heard all over the world of the majestic and magnificent entrance to the capital of returning consuls, and generals and emperors after some great victory; how, for days before, the city was clothed in holiday attire; everything was suspended but pleasure and pomp and at the appointed time the procession began to move along the sacred way toward the capital, preceded by great masses of splendid soldiers in perfect discipline and uniform, followed by long trains of captives, including kings and princes, and sometimes queens and beautiful women, walking in chains before the victor, while great multitudes of cattle for the sacrificial altar followed next behind; and then came the king or general himself in a gorgeous chariot drawn by many horses, clothed with every color of splendor, and followed by the vast train of the people given up to the carnival and revelry, until at last the pageant reached the steps of the capitol; and then some of those queens and kings and princesses would be taken aside and executed there, as the first sacrifice of the cruel, selfish triumph; and then the cattle were slain and offered in sacrifice to their heathen gods. So the mighty Caesar or some of his satellites would show himself the king. That was the human kingdom, that was man's stairway to a throne, and it was covered with cruelty and selfishness and blood.

The dear Lord Jesus in this chapter gives us His triumphal procession. He, too, was marching to a throne and to a kingdom. For thirty-three years He had been stepping up to it by the slow ascension of suffering and love. He refused from the devil the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a moment of time, and He would take His kingdom from His Father only--the pathway of blood, and sorrow and holy ministering love. And now, after long refusing earthly glories, after refusing the Galileans His consent to make Him a king, after passing so long through the pathway of obscurity, at last He puts aside the veil and lets them see Him in His true royalty and His kingly glory, and He begins to ascend the throne which for a little while only He will keep, but by and by He is going to sit upon forever.

Starting first from Jericho, He begins by healing poor Bartimeus, and then saving Zaccheus. Then He passes on to the home of Bethany, and is anointed by Mary, and then the next morning He passes on down the slopes of Olivet. Two of His disciples were sent before Him to prepare the way. A little ass and its colt upon which no man had ever sat are the chariots which He uses--sitting upon the lowliest, most commonplace of burden bearers, one that was used for toil and the meanest drudgery--on that little beast of burden He sits down, with the garments of his disciples as His trappings, then the multitude strew the way with palm branches and the little children cry: "Hosanna to the Son of David;" until at last the multitude join the procession, for there were three million of people at this time gathered around Jerusalem; it was the feast time, and on side hundreds of thousands of them were dwelling in little tents on the hillsides; and they heard the sounds and flocked around and joined them, until there was as vast a procession, perhaps, as ever accompanied Caesar to his throne; and, in the midst, rides the royal Nazarene, meek and lowly, and sitting upon an ass.

On the way, He pauses just before the descent, and gazes on the city. There is no light of triumph on His brow today; there is no self-glorying in that face, as He halts and looks down on the city at His feet. He gazes a moment, and then there burst from His eyes great floods of tears, and He weeps and weeps again in the hour of His triumph, and says, "If thou hadst known the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." And then He passes into the temple and as a King claims His place as its Master, driving out the earthliness and claiming it for His Father and Himself and stands there in the face of His enemies teaching and healing for whole week, defying them to arrest Him until His hour has come, a king in every sense--of wisdom, power, suffering and love. He shows Himself here as a King.

First, we see Him as the King of human hearts. He begins His royal march at Bethany, and receives first from Mary the offering of her love. Then, next we see Him as the King of the Jews, the Son of David, claiming the throne of Jerusalem, which He is yet to restore and possess. Then we see Him as the King of the Temple, stepping into His own house and saying; "My house." Three years before He had performed a similar miracle and said, "My Father's house." But He calls it "My house" now and He cleanses it by His word. Then, we see Him as the King of Love, weeping over sinners, and pardoning them in His mercy and then finally, we see Him as the conqueror of sin and sorrow and death, with a crown of thorns on His brow, the Author of redemption, the Prince of our salvation. You think of Him as your priest, you think of Him as your prophet, but He wants you to know Him as your King--ruling over you, ruling in you, conquering for you, and taking you to spread His kingdom abroad through the world.

Then, the coming of Christ to His kingdom, in this instance is the type of His coming to the individual heart. His ascension, His descent from the Mount of Olives, and His entrance to Jerusalem, is the foreshadowing of that which has come to some of our hearts, and which He wants to have come to all. O, it is a glorious hour in the soul's life when a voice from heaven says: "Daughter of Zion, behold, thy King cometh unto thee." You never know the deep reality and the central fact of living Christianity until on the mountain you

hear that voice: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee;" and, then, in your heart the sweet answering echo: "The Lord in the midst of thee is mighty." "Rejoice greatly, O, daughter of Zion, for lo, I come and dwell in the midst of thee."

Is it true for you? Has the King come on His throne in your heart? Is Jesus, the Son of God, ruling in you in glory and royal majesty and supreme dominion? O, if He be, the world's glories are but a poor sham and mockery. Ambition cannot tempt you, avarice cannot lead you aside. You have the King of kings within you, and you possess the reality of which all else is but the imitation.

Do you know this? I believe today He is coming to some of you. I shall never forget the day when across the face of these skies there was to me a living form, a real Christ--an everlasting friend who henceforth was no longer to be so far away that I had to pass through clouds and vast immensities to reach Him, but His throne was in the heart and His presence was within whispering distance: King of the heart and the life for all things to those that love and trust Him. O that today you might, listening, hear the voice: that says: "Daughter of Zion, thy King cometh unto thee;" and, by and by, you shall hear that other voice: "Daughter of Zion, thy King cometh for thee."

These were the dying words of Frances Ridley Havergal, that glorious spirit who shone in the sky of Christian life for many years, as dear to many of us as if we had known her personally. When she passed away it seemed as though we had lost a personal friend, and I like to trace the last moments of her life as she lay on that couch of pain and agony. Her face so lighted up that it was glorious, her whole frame reaching out and stretching forth as though to meet someone in mid air, and at last the words breathed up from her parted lips: "My King, my King, my King," and she passed away. But O, there had come an hour long before that when she had said: "My King, my King," and she took Him into her heart. He will never come for you as a King if He does not come to you first. Is He your King, beloved? O, don't be put off with the Christianity of mere church membership. Don't be: mocked with the Christianity of mere baptism and confirmation and communion. Don't be satisfied with the mere hope of pardon and of heaven. Beloved, the true religion is Jesus within you, a living King and a glorious Friend. May God grant that it may be true for you today: "Thy King cometh unto thee."

Again let me say before I leave it, that you cannot have God to come to you until you get like Him, meek and lowly. Thy King cometh to thee meek and lowly.

Now, some of you would not like to have Him come sitting on an ass. If He would come in a carriage, ring the bell respectfully, and have a good deal of show and social style, you would like it well but I am afraid if Jesus was to ride upon an ass to some of these mansions on Fifth Avenue, they would wonder who it was, and they would want Him to go around to the back door. They would not think that was treating them with respect.

Now, if your King is going to come to you, He: is not going to come to you with pride. Our King comes in such a way that have to get down on your knees and meet something that brings real humiliation, that makes you very small and if you are not willing to get down and be loyal and take Christ as the meek and lowly One, He is not going to come: to you. I have known some people that never could get God's full blessing until they let somebody bring it to them that they didn't think much of. The Lord is going to come to you in this way, and if you will not let Him come thus, He has plenty of other places to go. Are you willing to have Him as your King on His own level?

Again, when He comes He will cleanse the temple. You must remember that He is going to control your heart and love. Have you offered and dedicated yourself to Him for this?

This is also the type of His coming to His work and His Church in great spiritual blessings, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the quickening of God's work, and often in the new departure of the Church of God at such a time as this in our lives and history as a Church. Applying it to ourselves, we may look up and say: "Come:, Lord Jesus, and take command of Thy work; be the Captain of Thy host; be: the King of Thy kingdom; be the Proprietor of Thy house; be the Master of this work; be the Beginning and the End, the All-in-all of Thy people and all they desire to be, to have, and do for Thee." And I trust it is true of us today that the voices of yonder watchers are saying, "Rejoice greatly, O people of God, be glad, O land, for the Lord will do great things for you. He shall give you the years that the canker worms have eaten, and ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord who hath dealt wondrously with you and My people shall never be ashamed."

And then, again, this is the type of His second coming, for that is what most of all our hearts look forward to in hope and watchful and earnest preparation. "Behold, thy King cometh to thee," in a still grander sense. There is no coming of Christ to the heart, there: is no coming of Christ to the Church, there is no coming of Christ to the world, that can satisfy the longing for His personal return. Some people will tell you that they have Him in their soul, and that is enough. I find that the people who have Him in their soul long most for His nearer coming in the glorious advent.

There may be those here, this morning, to whom this is a new and somewhat unfamiliar thought. I will, therefore, just say in a few simple sentences that we believe the Scriptures to teach very plainly--and the number that so believe is increasing today in every part of the Church--that the great hope of Christ's Church is His own personal advent, His own return in the flesh to this world again where He walked before for thirty-three years, and as He ascended to heaven, said: "I will come again and receive you to myself." "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

We believe that this dispensation is the dispensation of the Gentiles, and that God is gathering in from the heathen nations a people for His kingdom. All that are willing to accept the: Gospel are accepted and pardoned, and shall have a share in the blessings of His kingdom; but He has nowhere said that during this age will the whole world be converted. The whole world is to hear the message, but only a portion shall accept it. Many shall be called, but few shall be chosen, and yet all shall be without excuse. When all shall have had an opportunity through the various tribes of earth, then we are told that the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in, and then the Lord will return and save His people Israel and give to the Jews again the hopes of their fathers, and the salvation which they rejected when He was here on earth. At the same time, He will Himself return and reign over them, He will be the literal King of Zion, He will sit on the throne of His Father, David, His ancient followers shall sit with Him ruling Israel.

This glorious day of the dear Lord's return is to be to us the day of the resurrection. It is to bring our return from the dust of death; or, if we shall be living at the time, it is to bring our translation into our resurrection bodies. It is to bring back our loved and lost who have died in Him, and it is to bring our own perfect spiritual and physical life. When He comes these bodies will be no more feeble, but they will be immortal. These souls will be free and glorious and pure like His, and together we shall meet Him and reign with Him on the earth for a thousand happy years.

That is the sure hope of the Gospel, and the promise of His Word. The conviction is pressing on Christians today that this advent is very near, that in the upheavals of society, in the workings of evil, in the intense unrest of the human heart, in the breaking up of nations and of social structures everywhere, in the throbbing of the world's heart in the earnest spirit of revival that is coming forth in the Church of God, in the love for His coming which is taking possession of the hearts of Christians, in strange manifestations of God's hand and power today in the healing of disease and the working of divine power in every part of the world we are seeing the signs of a great crisis very near, and that yonder these spaces are teeming with chariots and with horsemen that forms unseen are gathering, that great armies are marshalling, and that the trumpet of the great procession is sounding afar, and a voice is beginning to say: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." O, it is indeed a solemn age! I have not talked with an earnest man for several years, but has said, "It is the most solemn age I ever knew of, and we are on the verge of a great and important change." I believe that the dear Lord is coming soon, and perhaps we have come with this work and into this place to be ready for His advent to prepare others to meet Him, and to spread abroad the message of His salvation and of His kingdom to all the world before He comes.

Now, it is for this that the Lord Jesus is calling you today. "Behold thy King cometh unto thee;" and, because He is coming, "the Lord hath need of thee."

Let us look a moment at the Lord's instruments, the persons and things He wants to use.

First, you notice He wanted a poor, blind beggar--poor Bartimeus was one of them He had need of. Next, He sent two of His disciples before Him. Then, thirdly, He needed a little colt; the humble foal of an ass was His chief instrument; not the chariots and horsemen of Herod or Pilate, but a lowly little beast of burden, whom men only despised.

Again, He wanted the garments of the people to prepare for His coming. I believe, when the Lord Jesus is coming, He wants such instruments still. He wants poor, blind Bartimeus to tell the people that He is coming; He wants the blind and the dumb to speak for Him. He wants the two disciples--the lowly ones. He wants the little colt. And He wants your very robes to be ready and to be worthy of Him.

Again, He wanted the children as the instruments which were to share in His coming. The little ones were the voices which raised the cry, "Hosanna," and if we are to be used much to prepare for Christ's coming, we must gather the children.

Again, He wants the cry of poor sinners to herald His coming, for this word, "Hosanna," just means the cry of the sinner; it means "Have mercy on me." It is not Hallelujah. That is a blessed cry. But Hosanna is the very voice of a poor, guilty man, and the Lord wants sinners by the thousand to throng at His feet and to prepare His way by their penitential tears, their cries for mercy and their songs of salvation. Jesus wants these things. He is in need of them--in need of the two disciples, in need of the little colt, in need of your garments, in need of your children, in need of poor sinners. O, if you today are a poor, lost man, the Lord hath need of you, and He is going to call somebody today that will be one of the glorious lamp-bearers in the procession of His advent. It seems to me if I were an unsaved sinner nothing would have more weight to lead me to Christ than this blessed thought that He will take me to be His servant and His helper; and so, today, if one of you has been living for self and sin, the Lord will take you this very moment, and, turning from Him, you can go forth as one of the heralders of His coming and one of the instruments to prepare for it.

Now, remember, dear friend, the Lord really needs you, for He would not say, unless He meant it, that He needs you and your services to prepare for His coming. The Lord needs today people that understand His Gospel, He needs people that understand His coming, He needs people who love His coming, He needs people that labor for His coming, He needs your prayers, He needs your influence; and, today, in His mighty name, would I throw this mighty word--for O, it seems to me it is just like a cord that should bind you to His altar--"The Lord hath need of thee" and calls thee today to prepare for His return. "The Lord hath need of thee." I don't know where you are, but He needs you just there. I don't know what your station, but you are just in the place, in the situation, that He needs you in. He has adjusted your life for this very thing and put you in these very circumstances. He needed the Hebrew maid not in Israel, but in Syria not as a daughter of Samaria at home, but as a poor captive abroad. So He needs you in your place, perhaps, as a helper in some position of humility.

He needed little Miriam just to come at the right moment. It may seem very little that you should teach a child, but some one of those little ones may be the last great herald of the Master's coming. You don't know what He is going to do. He needs you, and O, it is so solemn for me to feel that He needs me just in the place He puts me and tells me to stand. Sometimes He gives demands and directions that seem a little strange and difficult, positions that require the crucifixion of one's self-consciousness, but if He needs us, there stand if you stand alone. The Lord understands it. The Lord hath need of you, and the Lord will stand for you.

He needs a little rivet, just as much as the great revolving wheel. Remember, the whole of life may hang on you. O, if we could get men and women to understand that the whole framework of God's kingdom rests on each one's faithfulness. If they would come to their work, not saying this one or that one is going to pray, it will be all right, but saying, "If I fail, everything may fail; I am the very one called to hold up God's cause at this point. I must stand just as the soldier in that battlefield must stand, knowing that if he breaks the line the other lines may break. So the Lord has need of you today. Be careful, be faithful, and trust Him for evermore.

And now, in closing, the Lord not only needs you, but He has a right to claim you. The Lord created you, made your body, made your soul for this very purpose--not to be indulged and admired, but because He needed you. Your very countenance, your very form, your very tone of voice, your very place in the family, your very social position, God gave you because He needed you. It belongs to Him. It is a part of His investment in you. It is a dreadful sacrilege to hold it back- The Lord not only created you, but He has provided for you, He has kept you, He has spent upon you more than anybody else ever spent, and He has a right to you. The Lord has redeemed you--bought you back. If you buy an article, you rather expect to get the good of it. If you buy a house, you don't expect anybody else to get the benefit of it, and so the Lord redeemed you for His own special use.

I should be ashamed to have my old father labor for twenty years, and work out his life and leave me his inheritance, and then take that money and squander it. Yes, I should be ashamed to take the blood of Christ to cover my sin or to save my wounded conscience, and prostitute it for sin. It is a horrible breach of trust. O, give up the cross of Jesus if you are going to live for self and sin. Let Christ go. Just as soon take your mother's picture into that house of shame and hold it up to ridicule and derision as take the blood of Jesus into sin. It is too sacred. You were bought. You are not your own. The Lord hath need of you and is expecting your service and has waited for it far too long already.

Again, not only has He redeemed you, but He owns you as His property. You say, "Well, I have not consecrated myself to God. I haven't gone as far as these people. This man and that woman have consecrated themselves, and I expect a good deal of them." O, dear soul, Christ consecrated you when He died for you. You are as much His own as if you had given yourself. The only difference is, the other has recognised the claim and you have not; but you are His; you belong to Him; you are not your own, and that does not lessen your obligation. The Lord has claims upon you. It is a very touching thought to me that He has made us the members by which He is to do His own work. He has made us the instruments of conveying His great gifts to the world, and He does not seem to have any other way to communicate Himself fully except through you. You just stand in the position of being Christ's hands, and feet, and tongue and limbs. He is the Head and you are the body. Now, suppose my head and heart wanted to do certain things, and my hands would not obey. Suppose my feet would not go forth on those errands; suppose that I was all paralysed or divided up, or selfish, and would not obey the voice of my brain, what a strange, distorted life I would have. Now, that is just the way our dear Lord is. He is our Head and we are His hands. He wants you to be a blessing to the world, and you will not, He is hindered by His own very flesh and blood.

If you were a trustee appointed for the special care of a sum of money which was to be for the benefit of poor children, and some good-hearted friend had put a million dollars in your hands, and you used it for yourself, how his heart would regret that he had given you this trust and let his kind purpose be hindered by your faithlessness. You and I are the executors of His blessing, and if we don't obey Him, when we meet Him at the last He will hold us responsible for the souls that are lost, and for our failure to carry out the purpose of His blessing. He needs you and me, and I trust that over this company of Christians as you pass out today, will hang a spell thrown over you from the Eternal, thrown over you from the cross where He died, thrown over you from the heaven where He abides, thrown over you from the judgment seat where you shall give your account, "The Lord hath need of thee." He wants you, dear brother, for some great work for Him; you, dear sister, for some place you cannot get excused from. He wants you to begin today and work for the Lord's coming. He sends you forth, saying: "Loose that little colt that is tied. Set free that influence that is bound up. The Lord hath need of it. He puts His hand on your shoulder and you cannot be released.

May God help you to be true, for it is sad when we disobey the claim of God. The barren fig tree was needed, but it would not give Him any fruit. The Lord had need in this very lesson of the fruit of that tree, but it refused Him its fruit. And what was the consequence? Before another day had come it was withered. And so, beloved, if the Lord has need of you and you don't meet Him, He will wither you, too, and you will stand like that barren tree. O, there are lives, I know, today, that don't know what is the matter--all blasted, all barren, all joyless, because when the Lord needed them they were afraid to obey. They refused to step out, and the Lord has no more use for them. The Lord will excuse you if you want to be excused. When Elijah went to anoint Elisha to be a prophet, Elisha said, "Suffer me to kiss my father and mother." And Elijah said, "Go, and return. What have I done to you?" As if he had said, "It does not matter. If you don't mind, God doesn't mind. You can be excused." Elisha went and took his oxen and his plow and offered them up in sacrifice to his God, lest he should be tempted to go back again--gave the whole thing over to God--and was henceforth known as the man who poured water on the hands of Elijah. "The Lord has need of thee," but if you want to be excused, He may say, "Go, return. What have I done to you? I will call somebody else." But O, I should not like to be excused.

And, O, the blessedness, on the other hand, of being used by God; the sweetness of that consciousness that the Lord did take us and make something of us. I have at some time seen in a museum a drinking cup of George Washington, and how it was treasured because he drank water out of it; or the pen of some martyr, or the ink bottle of some reformer how they treasured it. John Knox sat in that old chair, and O, how men treasure it because he needs it. By and by they will come again in yonder heaven and say, "The Lord used her; the Lord used him," and you will be forever glorious because God made you His instrument. It is glorious to be used by God.

Once, away up in the Highlands of Scotland, Queen Victoria, while walking in the country near her summer palace, sat down in an old Highland lady's cabin and began to talk to her. She sat down on a little, old, three-legged stool and talked away for a long time with the old granny, but didn't let her know who she was, and then she said good-bye and left, the old lady wondering at her generosity. A few hours afterward, somebody came in and said, "Do you know who that is?" "No," she said. "Why, that was thee queen." "The queen! Did she sit on my stool?" And then she took up that stool and put it in a secret place by itself, and curtained it around. When people asked her why, she said: "Nobody will ever sit on that stool again." She handed it down to her children because her queen had sat upon it. I guess if the Roman Catholic Church, or the old Medieval Church, could have gotten the bones of that little colt that Christ sat upon, they would have built a church somewhere in Italy for it. It was not necessary that that little colt should ever drive the plow any more; it was not necessary that it should ever drag a cart. It had done its mission. The Lord had need of it, He used it, and forevermore it was linked with Him.

O, beloved, let the Lord use you and you will be glorious forevermore. Go this morning and say, "Lord, do you want me for this work, or do you want me for some work that perhaps I would not have chosen myself. Here I am, Lord. Thou hast need of me, and O, I have greater need of Thee." And when He comes you will find ten thousandfold return for the sacrifices and services of these days. With our faces, then, toward His second coming, let us go forth and let Him use us as He will, and then give to us a place by His side upon His throne; and to Jesus, our King, be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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