**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**MARK-056**. **CHRIST'S NEED OF US AND OURS by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"... Say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither."*

*Mark 11:13*

You will remember that Jesus Christ sent two of His disciples into the village that looked down on the road from Bethany to Jerusalem, with minute instructions and information as to what they were to do and find there. The instructions may have one of two explanations--they suggest either superhuman knowledge or a previous arrangement. Perhaps, although it is less familiar to our thoughts, the latter is the explanation. There is a remarkable resemblance, in that respect, to another incident which lies close beside this one in time, when our Lord again sent two disciples to make preparation for the Passover, and, with similar minuteness, told them that they would find, at a certain point, a man bearing a pitcher of water. Him they were to accost, and he would take them to the room that had been prepared. Now the old explanation of both these incidents is that Jesus Christ knew what was going to happen. Another possible explanation, and in my view more probable and quite as instructive, is, that Jesus Christ had settled with the two owners what was to happen. Clearly, the owner of the colt was a disciple, because at once he gave up his property when the message was repeated, the Lord hath need of him. Probably he had been one of the guests at the modest festival that had been held the night before, in the village close by, in Simon's house, and had seen how Mary had expended her most precious possession on the Lord, and, under the influence of the resurrection of Lazarus, he, too, perhaps, was touched, and was glad to arrange with Jesus Christ to have his colt waiting there at the cross-road for his Master's convenience. But, be that as it may, it seems to me that this incident, and especially these words that I have read for a text, carry very striking and important lessons for us, whether we look at them in connection with the incident itself, or whether we venture to give them a somewhat wider application. Let me take these two points in turn.

**I. Now, what strikes one about our Lord's requisitioning the colt is this, that here is a piece of conduct on His part singularly unlike all the rest of His life.**

All through it, up to this last moment, His one care was to damp down popular enthusiasm, to put on the drag whenever there came to be the least symptom of it, to discourage any reference to Him as the Messiah-King of Israel, to shrink back from the coarse adulation of the crowd, and to glide quietly through the world, blessing and doing good. But now, at the end, He flings off all disguise. He deliberately sets Himself, at a time when popular enthusiasm ran highest and was most turbid and difficult to manage, at the gathering of the nation for the Passover in Jerusalem, to cast an effervescing element into the caldron. If He had planned to create a popular rising, He could not have done anything more certain to bring it about than what He did that morning when He made arrangements for a triumphal procession into the city, amidst the excited crowds gathered from every quarter of the land. Why did He do that? What was the meaning of it? Then there is another point in this requisitioning of the colt. He not only deliberately set Himself to stir up popular excitement, but He consciously did what would be an outward fulfilment of a great Messianic prophecy. I hope you are wiser than to fancy that Zechariah's prophecy of the peaceful monarch who was to come to Zion, meek and victorious, and riding upon a colt the foal of an ass, was fulfilled by the outward fact of Christ being mounted on this colt whereon never man sat. That is only the shell, and if there had been no such triumphal entry, our Lord would as completely have fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy. The fulfilment of it did not depend on the petty detail of the animal upon which He sat when He entered the city, nor even on that entrance. The meaning of the prophecy was that to Zion, wherever and whatever it is, there should come that Messianic King, whose reign owed nothing to chariots and horses and weapons of war for its establishment, but who, meek and patient, pacing upon the humble animal used only for peaceful services, and not mounted on the prancing steed of the warrior, should inaugurate the reign of majesty and of meekness. Our Lord uses the external fact just as the prophet had used it, as of no value in itself, but as a picturesque emblem of the very spirit of His kingdom. The literal fulfilment was a kind of finger-post for inattentive onlookers, which might induce them to look more closely, and so see that He was indeed the King Messiah, because of more important correspondences with prophecy than His once riding on an ass. Do not so degrade these Old Testament prophecies as to fancy that their literal fulfilment is of chief importance. That is the shell: the kernel is the all-important thing, and Jesus Christ would have fulfilled the r? that was sketched for Him by the prophets of old, just as completely if there never had been this entrance into Jerusalem.

But, further, the fact that He had to borrow the colt was as significant as the choice of it. For so we see blended two things, the blending of which makes the unique peculiarity and sublimity of Christ's life: absolute authority, and meekness of poverty and lowliness. A King, and yet a pauper-King! A King claiming His dominion, and yet obliged to borrow another man's colt in order that He might do it! A strange kind of monarch!--and yet that remarkable combination runs through all His life. He had to be obliged to a couple of fishermen for a boat, but He sat in it, to speak words of divine wisdom. He had to be obliged to a lad in the crowd for barley loaves and fishes, but when He took them into His hands they were multiplied. He had to be obliged for a grave, and yet He rose from the borrowed grave the Lord of life and death. And so when He would pose as a King, He has to borrow the regalia, and to be obliged to this anonymous friend for the colt which made the emphasis of His claim. Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.

**II. And now turn for a moment to the wider application of these words.**

The Lord hath need of him. That opens the door to thoughts, that I cannot crowd into the few minutes that I have at my disposal, as to that great and wonderful truth that Christ cannot assume His kingdom in this world without your help, and that of the other people whose hearts are touched by His love. The Lord hath needof them. Though upon that Cross of Calvary He did all that was necessary for the redemption of the world and the salvation of humanity as a whole, yet for the bearing of that blessing into individual hearts, and for the application of the full powers that are stored in the Gospel and in Jesus, to their work in the world, the missing link is man. We are fellow-labourers with God. We are Christ's tools. The instruments by which He builds His kingdom are the souls that have already accepted His authority. The Lord hath need of him, though, as the psalmist sings, If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for all the beasts of the forest are Mine. Yes, and when the Word was made flesh, He had need of one of the humblest of the beasts. The Christ that redeemed the world needs us, to carry out and to bring into effect His redemption. God mend all, said one, and the answer was, We must help Him to mend it.

Notice again the authoritative demand, which does not contemplate the possibility of reluctance or refusal. The Lord hath need of him. That is all. There is no explanation or motive alleged to induce surrender to the demand. This is a royal style of speech. It is the way in which, in despotic countries, kings lay their demands upon a poor man's whole plenishing and possession, and sweep away all.

Jesus Christ comes to us in like fashion, and brushes aside all our convenience and everything else, and says, I want you, and that is enough. Is it not enough? Should it not be enough? If He demands, He has the right to demand. For we are His, bought with a price. All the slave's possessions are his owner's property. The slave is given a little patch of garden ground, and perhaps allowed to keep a fowl or two, but the master can come and say, Now I want them, and the slave has nothing for it but to give them up.

The Lord hath need of himis in the autocratic tone of One who has absolute power over us and ours. And that power, where does it come from? It comes from His absolute surrender of Himself to us, and because He has wholly given Himself for us. He does not expect us to say one contrary word when He sends and says, I have need of you, or of yours.

Here, again, we have an instance of glad surrender. The last words of my text are susceptible of a double meaning. Straightway he will send him hither--who is he? It is usually understood to be the owner of the colt, and the clause is supposed to be Christ's assurance to the two messengers of the success of their errand. So understood, the words suggest the great truth that Love loosens the hand that grasps possessions, and unlocks our treasure-houses. There is nothing more blessed than to give in response to the requirement of love. And so, to Christ's authoritative demand, the only proper answer is obedience swift and glad, because it is loving. Many possibilities of joy and blessing are lost by us through not yielding on the instant to Christ's demands. Hesitation and delay are dangerous. In straightwaycomplying are security and joy. If the owner had begun to say to himself that he very much needed the colt, or that he saw no reason why some one else's beast should not have been taken, or that he would send the animal very soon, but must have the use of him for an hour or two first, he would probably never have sent him at all, and so would have missed the greatest honour of his life. As soon as I know what Christ wants from me, without delay let me do it; for if I begin with delaying I shall probably end with declining. The Psalmist was wise when he laid emphasis on the swiftness of his obedience, and said, I made haste and delayed not, but made haste to keep Thy commandments.

But another view of the words makes them part of the message to the owner of the colt, and not of the assurance to the disciples. Say ye that the Lord hath need of him, and that straightway (when He has done with him) He will send him back again. That is a possible rendering, and I am disposed to think it is the proper one. By it the owner is told that he is not parting with his property for good and all, that Jesus only wishes to borrow the animal for the morning, and that it will be returned in the afternoon. What does that view of the words suggest to us? Do you not think that that colt, when it did come back--for of course it came back some time or other,--was a great deal more precious to its owner than it ever had been before, or ever could have been if it had not been lent to Christ, and Christ had not made His royal entry upon it? Can you not fancy that the man, if he was, as he evidently was, a disciple and lover of the Lord, would look at it, especially after the Crucifixion and the Ascension, and think, What an honour to me, that I provided the mount for that triumphal entry!? It is always so. If you wish anything to become precious, lend it to Jesus Christ, and when it comes back again, as it will come back, there will be a fragrance about it, a touch of His fingers will be left upon it, a memory that He has used it. If you desire to own yourselves, and to make yourselves worth owning, give yourselves to Christ. If you wish to get the greatest possible blessing and good out of possessions, lay them at His feet. If you wish love to be hallowed, joy to be calmed, perpetuated, and deepened, carry it to Him. If the house be worthy, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, like the dove to the ark when it could find no footing in the turbid and drowned world, it shall come back to you again. Straightway He will send him back again, and that which I give to Jesus He will return enhanced, and it will be more truly and more blessedly mine, because I have laid it in His hands. This altarsanctifies the giver and the gift.