

The Servant of the Lord

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a servant of the Lord, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and fulfilling the role of representing God by our lives and testimony.

Scripture: Psalm 40:8, Isaiah 42:1-4, Isaiah 42:6-8, Matthew 3:17, Matthew 12:14-21, John 8:11-17, Galatians 4:4

Topics: "Servanthood", "Christ's Compassion"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the significance of Jesus as the Servant of the Lord, who fulfills God's will and represents Him to the world. He contrasts Israel's failure to serve as God's messenger with Christ's perfect obedience and gentle strength, highlighting how Jesus embodies meekness and compassion, caring for the broken and the weak. Simpson encourages believers to follow Christ's example of service, acceptance, and anointing, reminding them that they too are called to be servants of the Lord. The sermon illustrates that true strength lies in gentleness and that Christ's love empowers us to serve others. Ultimately, it calls for a deeper commitment to live out our faith as faithful servants in the world.

Transcript

"Behold My servant whom I uphold, My elect in whom My soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon Him. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; he shall not cry nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged until he has set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for his law." (Is. 42: 1-4.)

This expression, "the servant of the Lord," is a sort of keynote to a large portion of the prophecies of Isaiah. The phrase is used in three senses. First, it is applied to Israel, the servant of the Lord. We find it so used in Isaiah 41: 8, and other passages, "You, Israel, are My servant; Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, My friend."

But Israel failed to fulfil his great trust as the servant of the Lord and was put aside and the Lord Jesus Christ now becomes the Servant of the Lord. So the expression is used in the present text. So again in Isaiah 49: 3, 52: 13, 53: 11, etc. Then the plural form is used and in several passages toward the end of the prophecy we find, "The servants of the Lord" spoken of. The reference here is to the people of God individually who, as members of Christ and fellow servants of the great Minister of the covenant follow in His steps of service. So we find it in Isaiah 54: 17, 65: 13, etc. It is to the second application of this term that our attention is now called.

I. The Great Servant.

God wanted some one to represent Him in the world. He had given to mankind a revelation of His will and it was necessary that some one should fulfil it. God's law could not be left a broken and dishonored memorial of man's disobedience like some splendid architectural plan which no one could be found to transform into an actual edifice. His honor and glory demanded that some one should fulfil it and render unto heaven a devotion and service which man had failed to give.

It was for this purpose that Israel had his high calling, and yet Israel utterly failed to keep his own law. At last one Man was found who could render unto heaven the obedience due to the authority of God. "Lo, I come," was His cry, "I delight to do Your will, oh God, yes Your law is in My Heart." (Ps. 40: 8.) At every step of His earthly life the supreme business of Jesus was to do His Father's will, and He was able to say, "I do always those things that please Him." (John 8: 29.) The one supreme purpose of His life was to glorify the Father and finish the work He had given Him to do, and at last He could say, as He handed over His accomplished task, "I have glorified You on the earth; I have finished the work You gave Me to do." (John 17: 4.)

Among the types of Moses, there was a beautiful ceremony by which a Hebrew slave, when his term of service had expired and he had the option to go free, was permitted, if he preferred, to resume the yoke of bondage and continue a slave by his own choice. Perhaps his wife and children were slaves and he did not want to leave them in bondage. Perhaps he loved his master better than his liberty, and did not want to go free, and so he was permitted to say, "I love my master, I love my wife and children, I will not go out free." And then this ceremony was performed. His ear was pierced and he was nailed to the doorpost of his master's house by his ear in token of voluntary subjection and servitude.

This beautiful type has been applied to Christ in one of the prophetic Psalms where the Messiah is represented as saying, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears have You bored; then said I: Lo, I come, I delight to do Your will, oh My God, yes, Your law is within my heart." (Ps. 40: 6-8.)

This is a picture of Christ as the great Servant. He might have retained His liberty and remained in heaven, but He loved His Father, He loved His Bride, the Church, He loved His lost children here, and He gave up His liberty and as the apostle expresses it in Galatians, "For when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law." (Gal. 4: 4.) He fulfilled our tasks, He paid our debts. He offered to God the righteousness which we had failed to give and of His finished work the Father could say, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sakes; He will magnify the law and make it honorable." (Is. 42: 21.)

But there was another purpose which Israel failed to serve as the Lord's servant, and that was to be God's messenger to the world, the light of the Gentiles and the revealer of God's holiness and grace to the children of men. Instead of this Israel sank, through their sins, to a condition that the prophets describe as even worse than the heathen. God had to humble them before their enemies and send them into shameful captivity under the Gentile nations. This glorious ministry has been committed unto the divine Servant and so we read in this passage, "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness and will hold Your hand and will keep You, and give You for a covenant of the people, for the light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the Lord, that is My name, and My glory I will not give to another, neither My praise to graven images." (Is. 42: 6-8.)

In these respects, we are called likewise to be servants of the Lord; to represent Him by our lives and by our testimony as the messengers of His Word to all mankind. The apostles loved to call themselves the servants of the Lord. Christ taught His disciples that the highest honor was in the lowliest service. "He that will be great among you, let him be your minister, and he that will be chief, let him be your slave."

Oh, that we might be able to say, as our High Priest, "Whose I am and Whom I serve."

II. The Servant's acceptance.

"Behold My servant in whom My soul delights." (Is. 42: 1.) God's heart had been disappointed in the race. There had come up to Him from this sinful world the stench of human vileness, and age after age He had sought for someone that could bring the sacrifices of a sweet smelling savor. At last on Jordan's banks there stood a man to whom He could say, "Behold My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3: 17.) God's face shone with a light so bright that it broke through the opening heavens, and for a moment shed its glory upon the earth beneath.

It is because of that acceptance that we are justified and accepted now. "He has made us accepted in the beloved," is the measure of our standing as justified believers in the sight of God. Literally, the verse means "accepted in the Son of His love," and it conveys the force that we are accepted just as He and loved the same as He. Not only so, our sanctification comes through Him. In His sublime prayer in John 17, He thus prays concerning the Father's love "that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them and I in them." He asks His Father to love us just as He loves the Son. The reason: He is so in us Himself that our personality disappears from view and it is only the Christ in us that the Father sees and loves. So we can pass out of our own self-consciousness and into this blessed Christ consciousness, and although feeling utterly unworthy in our own name we can ever by the righteousness of Jesus Christ our perfect sacrifice, know that this is true:

"So dear, so very dear to God,

More dear I cannot be;

The love wherewith He loves His Son.

That love He has for me."

III. The Servant's anointing.

"I have put My Spirit upon him." (Is. 42: 1.) The Father endued Him for His work by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. That Spirit He shares with us and in Him we claim the same anointing for the same service. We are not asked to render unto Him our services at our own charges, but it is said of our ministry that we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works which were before prepared that we should walk in them." The gifts of power, wisdom, faith and supernatural efficiency prescribed for the church in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians are all called "charismata," that is, abilities bestowed upon us, not talents original with us.

Even love itself, the greatest of all the graces, is a gift and not a virtue. It is Christ's love shed abroad in our hearts and flowing out to others from Him.

Beloved, are we anointed for service? Are we faithful servants and are we walking in the light of the blessed "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord."

IV. The Servant's meekness.

"He shall not cry nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." (Is. 42: 2.)

The first element in the training of a good servant is discipline, subjection, self-suppression and self-restraint. How beautifully we behold this in the meek and lowly Christ! "I am among men as He that serves. "In this age of loud and noisy people, when even Christian work is blazoned, advertised and flaunted before the eyes of the multitude, how restful to turn to this picture of Him who is our great Example of service. The Hebrew word here literally means loud and screaming. He was not loud and screaming, but His Spirit was very chastened and self-suppressed. We get a little conception of how the Deity within Him was pressing out for expression in that scene in the temple when He was twelve years old and when His heart gave utterance to that deep cry, "Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2: 49.) And yet He went back for eighteen years to the quiet drudgery of the work-bench at Nazareth and held within that bursting heart, that longing to glorify His Father and save and help His fellow men. At length the devil came to Him, to His highest longings, and whispered, "Now is your chance to reveal yourself and glorify your Father by a stupendous miracle. Cast yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple, throw yourself upon the protecting arms of omnipotence, let the people see who you are." But He only said, "Get behind Me, Satan; you shall not tempt the Lord, your God." Yet again the adversary tried to tempt Him to accept a throne among the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory, urging no doubt, not his selfish ambition and personal glory so much as the opportunity it would give Him to be a blessing to the world and alleviate the miseries of mankind. But again He refused the tempting offer and went forth on His path of lowly suffering.

During His earthly ministry how often we find Him giving up His rights. Just before Matthew quotes this passage from our text, he tells, (Matt. 12: 14), "They held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from there and great multitudes followed Him and He healed them all and charged them that they should not make Him known: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, saying, "Behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My Spirit upon Him and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles; He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." (Is. 42: 1, 2.)

A little later, they tried to take Him by force and make Him a king, but He gently took Himself out of their hands. The Samaritans refused to receive Him and the ardent disciples insisted that He should call down fire from heaven and consume them, but He quietly answered, "You know not what manner of Spirit you are of," and He went to another village. To the very close of His earthly ministry, we see the spirit of self-restraint. In the judgment hall, He answered not a word. Even after His resurrection, His appearances to the disciples were of the most simple and quiet character, and all the glory which He had won by His great redemption He kept in reserve, giving to His followers rather than assuming to Himself the victories of Pentecost and waiting for the reward of His sufferings until the end of the age while He still ministers in sympathy and tenderness to His suffering church, and is content to be the rejected Nazarene and let the present age have its day while He is slowly gathering in from the lowly children of sin the members of His body and His Bride.

Oh, that our service were more like His, more hidden "in the shadow of His hand" with less of self and more of Christ, and with that "hiding of His power" which is the very triumph of power divine.

The power which today controls the tremendous machinery of our age was hidden deep in the bowels of the earth thousands of years ago by the fire that consumed primeval forests and stored the coal mines of our mountains with the real material of all physical force. The mighty battleship, the swift Atlantic flyer, the trains that sweep across the myriad tracks of transportation are all moved by the coal mines of the mountains.

So the force which God uses in the great processes of the spiritual world comes forth from the hidden depths of lives where perhaps long ago the natural and the earthly were burned away by the fire of the Holy Ghost and God was starting up the power which today is leading some great revival or evangelizing some heathen land.

So Jesus waited at Nazareth and gathered the forces which made the last three and one-half years of His life accomplish more for the world than all the centuries before or since.

God help us to learn the silent sources of spiritual power and the ministry of waiting as well as working.

V. The Servant's gentleness.

"The bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not quench." (Is. 42: 3.) We need not seek far in the story of His life to find the illustrations of this blessed portrait.

Look at that crushed life which kneels weeping at His feet condemned by the Pharisee, condemned by her own sense of right, a bruised reed. What is there left for a woman who has thus lost all? But listen to Him: "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8: 11.) Look again at the disciple that has denied and blasphemed Him. Alas, Peter, it does seem to be all over with you this time. The Master is going now to come back no more. Many a time have you blundered and He has been there to take you up, forgive you and start you out again, but that is all over. Look, they are taking Him away, bound and fettered and in a little while He will be crucified and dead. It is too late, Peter. But lo, just at the last moment that loving, yearning face of Christ turns back and looks on Peter and that look was a volume. It said, "No, Peter, it is not all over. I forgive you and I trust you still." "And Peter wondered and wept bitterly." But for that look it would have been the story of Judas duplicated, but He would not break the bruised reed, and from that hour Peter was bound to his Master with a love that could never die, and his restored life was given to comfort tempted ones.

There is no life so crushed, there is no heart so discouraged but He has still some look of love, some word of cheer, some touch of victorious help.

The smoking flax refers rather to the feeble beginnings which others might think scarcely worth the trouble of treasuring, but He will take the feeblest beginning and fan the flame to a glorious fire. Look at that cowardly inquirer who comes sneaking in at the back door of the Master's lodging tonight. He is a member of the Jewish council. His name is Nicodemus and were it known that he was here it would be as much as his reputation is worth. Why does not the Lord disdain to meet him in this clandestine way? Why does He not say, "Nicodemus, I will have no followers that do not come out in the open and confess Me without reserve." Ah, no! Jesus is glad to see him. It is only a little smoke, but some day this man will stand up in that great council and defend the Master before His enemies. And so the Lord meets him and tells him the

story of the new birth and the wondrous love of the Father in giving His only Son, and that man goes out tonight with a new life that can never die.

And Thomas, the doubting disciple, with scarcely faith enough to come to the meeting with his brethren; Thomas, the agnostic, demanding ocular demonstration and making his own terms of faith. All right, Thomas, you can come too. If you want to put your hand in the wound of the spear, you are welcome. It is the nearest way to My heart. The Lord meets him on his own terms, but Thomas falls at His feet astonished, overwhelmed, ashamed, a thousand times convinced, crying, "My Lord and my God."

Are there any reading these lines who feel that they have but a weak will, a timid faith and a worthless life to bring to Christ? Bring what you have. Better come blundering to His feet than not at all. He will not quench the smoking flax; He will not break the bruised reed.

VI. The Servant's strength.

But His gentleness is not weakness. Oh no! "He shall not fail nor be discouraged until he send forth judgment unto victory." (Is. 42: 4.) The words translated "fail" and "discouraged" are the same as translated just before "break" and "quench." While He will not despise the weak, He is not weak. What a mighty evidence the prophet gives us of His glorious and victorious strength. There is nothing in ancient prophecy more sublime than this prophetic vision of what some has called the passion of God as it rises to its climax and as He comes forth to the world in His last manifestation to beat down His adversaries and bring in His kingdom. "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty Man; He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; He shall cry, yes, roar; He shall prevail against His enemies." And then, like a great spasm of inward conflict, He continues, "I have long time held My peace, I have been still and refrained Myself; now will I cry like a travailing woman, I will destroy and devour at once; I will make waste mountains and islands and dry up all their herbs, and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools, and I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known; I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto them and not forsake them." Space will not permit us to dwell on this sublime picture of the conflict of Christ and the passionate intensity with which we should be ready to enter into that conflict in the victories of faith and prayer. We are reading today of men of God who stand in front of a great religious movement whose very souls seem rent asunder in agonies of prayer as they plead for perishing souls, and we have also been told how the Holy Ghost has come in tidal waves of victory and blessing just through such spiritual conflicts and agonizing prayers. It is Gethsemane repeated in the body of Christ as once it was experienced by the Head. It is through His people the Master is to fight these final battles and win these millennial triumphs.

Oh, that we might enter into His throbbing heart, oh, that we might share the anguish of His love and the joy of His triumph, oh that each of us might say

"Lord, kindle in this heart of mine

The passion fire of love divine."

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