

3

**Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling.
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.**

THIS “VERSE” HAS STAYED with me for almost 20 years, since I first read it at the conclusion of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones’ published sermon on poverty. Although I now know that the lines are a combination of two old hymns, originally I thought this was one poem penned by a single inspired writer from a bygone time. Anyway, today on a walk that followed a basically unfruitful prayer time, these thoughtful words came to me again, beckoned, perhaps, by the blue skies and crisp cool air and the smell of towering pine trees.

As I said the lines over and over, the thought occurred to me that, in the ways of the world, “arriving empty-handed” isn’t considered to be a positive thing. In fact, it has become a way to describe people who didn’t accomplish what they were sent out to do. Perhaps that is why we often feel the need to *carry* our accomplishments and our plans into our prayer and worship time.

Instead of coming to the Lord with nothing in our hands, we bring all sorts of baggage with us—what we want and need to do and what we hope God will help us do. Or, we could be filled to overflowing with the things we have done for Him and are doing for Him. And during our Sunday worship, our “hands” likely are filled once again with all the forms of worship and ritual and denominational activity.

Why do I find the idea of coming before the Lord “empty-handed” so appealing? Because this image, to me, represents the ultimate of yielding. Verses like these, written long before the prosperity theology we hear so often today, describe purer Christian motives, ones where we are emptied of self—emptied of any personal sense of entitlement or righteousness, emptied of any expectation for reward or blessing. In his chapter “Self-Denial,” George MacDonald describes such self-abandonment and emptiness of will in this way:

No grasping or seeking, no hungering of the individual, shall give motion to the will. No desire to be conscious of worthiness shall order the life. No ambition whatever shall be a motive of action. (Heart 118)

When we abandon such personal aspirations, we have only the cross to cling to. And for me this means clinging to the Saviour, clinging to what he is and what he does and what he has done. To be with him each day is “all I need.” Please, “O Lamb of God,” help me to come before you with empty hands and plenty of room in my heart.