

JESUS IN OUR MIDST

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 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said unto them, Peace be with you.”
John 20:19.

WE do not wonder that when certain devout Greeks came up to keep the feast at Jerusalem they said to Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Who would not want to see Him? Who that has been redeemed by His precious blood does not long to behold Him? As a child pines for its mother, so have we been sick with strong desire to behold our Lord! Yet to see the King in His beauty with these eyes of ours is denied to us for the present. But the reasons for delay are so gracious that we are well content to tarry. It is better for us that the bodily Presence of our Lord should be withdrawn, for otherwise the Comforter would not come unto us and the Comforter, even the blessed Spirit, brings us richer gifts than even the personal Presence of Christ could have conferred!

Still, reasons cannot utterly remove longings, and we would still be glad to behold our Lord. Is it not natural that a soldier should wish to hear his Captain's voice? At least there is something excusable about it, if, every now and then, we dare to wish that we could have a glimpse, even if it were ever so short, of our own Well-Beloved, altogether lovely Lord. If we could but catch a glimpse of that face whose brightness outshines the sun, how it would stimulate us! But, Brothers and Sisters, it must not be. Until He, Himself, shall come, or till He shall take us up to be with Him where He is, we must be content with faith and postpone our desires for sight.

So far as the needs of the Gospel kingdom are concerned, the need for eye-witnesses is over. Apostles who had seen the Lord are required no more. Forty days of our Savior's tarrying here below sufficed to let a sufficient number of persons fully assure themselves that He had actually risen from the dead. And Jesus took great care that there should be left behind a body of evidence concerning the actual resurrection of His body which would render that fact indisputably certain to all candid minds. Probably there is no statement of human history which is better sustained by evidence than this fact—that Jesus of Nazareth who hung upon the Cross and died, did afterwards rise again from the dead!

The time of eye-witnesses is now over. More evidence would be superfluous and we are now in the mid-ocean of faith. The Lord knows that sight interferes with faith, and, therefore, He does not give us a mixture of the two. We do not walk by sight *and* faith, but, “we walk by faith, *not by sight.*” To let us occasionally see, would, in fact, remove us out of the realm of faith and bring us down from the high position of Believers to the low platform of sightseers. Adieu, therefore, for a while, O Sight! Yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, there are *spiritual* visits from Jesus which are more than sufficient substitutes for His bodily Presence and these we may still desire and expect.

Christ may be really present where He is not materially present! There is a discerning of the Presence of Christ which we must all have, especially when we come to the communion table, for we are told that he who there discerns not the Lord's body eats and drinks unworthily. There is a discerning of the Lord's Presence in the midst of His people which is essential to the power of our assemblies. I pray that we may have this, even now, and if we do, we shall not be a whit behind those who saw Jesus with their eyes and heard Him with their ears! I do not think there is any privilege which the actual bodily Presence of Christ could bestow which we may not obtain at this moment by the actual *spiritual* Presence of Christ, if we do but exercise faith in Him as being in the midst of us.

He has said, “Lo, I am with you always,” and this is the pledge of every conceivable good. Concerning this Presence I shall speak, using the story as told by the Evangelists as a sort of type of that spiritual communion which I hope we may now realize.

I. Our first point this morning shall be, THERE IS A PECULIAR MANNER IN OUR LORD'S COMING TO HIS DISCIPLES. You will see, first, that *He comes gladly to them*. I am sure He came gladly, for He came so soon and so often. First, He appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to Simon, then to the two at Emmaus and then to the 11 at Jerusalem. There are at least four times in a day in which the Risen One seeks His Brethren. These visits of His were in different places, somewhat remote from each other. It was a busy day with Him, this first day after He had risen from the dead! How true it was after His Resurrection, even as it was in ages long ago, that His delights were with the sons of men.

He evidently loved to be where His people were. He might have gone away and spent the 40 days in the desert, triumphing on the scene of His former conflict. Or He might have surveyed the earth in lonely travel, but instead He spent His sacred leisure with His people. And on the first day after He had risen from the grave we have record of no less than four interviews which He had with His disciples. Remember that on each occasion He came right willingly and showed Himself freely. Magdalene, it is true, went to the tomb seeking Him, but He might readily have remained unknown had He so desired.

I know not where Simon was when his Lord met him, but he, also, did not find Him as the result of search. As for the two disciples at Emmaus, they were going away from Jerusalem and evidently were not seeking Him, yet He joined Himself to their company. And the 11 had met to console each other, but not to meet with Jesus—that was a matter beyond their expectation. The doors were shut. No sentinel stood ready to look for the appearing of the Lord Jesus, but He came to them all of a sudden, an uninvited guest! I gather from this, Beloved, that our blessed Lord delights to manifest Himself to His people even now, for we know that He is the same as always.

After a *spiritual* manner He is glad to come and sup with us that we may sup with Him. He is not reluctant to visit the places where His people assemble. It is the joy of His soul to look those in the face for whom He shed His blood and to hear their prayers and praises and accept their offerings. You have not, today, therefore, in the prayer which I trust you are breathing to Him, to urge an unwilling guest to come where He cares not to be. You have not to lay hold of Him and constrain Him, saying, “Abide with us.” He will be glad to reveal Himself to you as He does not unto the world. Jesus comes cheerfully where He is cheerfully received. He even comes to those who invite Him not and, therefore, He will surely turn aside and tarry with you who are longing for fellowship with Him.

He came on that occasion, also, *to those who were quite unworthy of so great a privilege*—for who were those eleven? God forbid we should say a hard word against those honored men, but in reference to their Master they had not behaved as they should have done. It is written, “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” Among that 11 there was not one who had stood up in his Lord's defense, not even the man who had leaned his head upon His bosom. No, one who was not the least among them had, with oaths and cursing, denied Him! They had not forgotten Him or renounced His cause, or else they would not have met as they were doing. But they had all disbelieved the promise of His return, or else they had not met in fear and trembling as they did that night.

I think some leaders would have refused to acknowledge such followers, or at best would have sent them cold commands and denied them their company till they were in a better spirit. Our Master came to His cowardly, faithless disciples and stood in the midst of them uttering the cheering salutation, “Peace be with you!” My Soul, why should He not come to you, though you are the most unworthy of all whom He has bought with His blood? Though you assuredly have been unfaithful, cowardly and unbelieving, yet even upon *you* may His light arise and into your ears may He speak the peaceful benediction, even as He did unto the eleven. This ought to be a point of great comfort to you, this morning, and great incitement to hope that you will obtain the Lord's spiritual Presence, unworthy though you are.

Note again, the manner of His coming. He came to the full assembly of the Apostles and their companions, *after He had been seen by the few*. That is to say, first one had seen Him, then another one. And then two—and then the full quorum of the 11 and they that were with them were favored with His company. I am glad, my Brothers and Sisters, to know that this morning early, soon after break of day, a few of the household of faith met under this roof and found their Master among them displaying His love. I know, also, that a second time, before we assembled in this upper room for worship, there was in the basement below another company gathered together, who sought and found our Lord. And, moreover, one at least is here who saw Jesus early this morning in his own chamber while privately worshipping.

These are good tokens, my Brethren, for now that we have all come together, many more than 11, and now that all our hearts are eager after Him, we shall surely meet with Him! Since the Brothers and the Sisters say, “We have seen Him

this morning. We saw Him in our chambers. We saw Him as we walled to the house of prayer. We met Him in the early morning Prayer Meeting,” this is good news to us and confirms our hope that He will come to us, also. Yes, Beloved, He will come to the feast! Even now I see Him and His Presence makes my heart burn within me!

Our Lord came to His disciples *when they were met together quietly*, secluded from the world, shut in as much as they could be from its cares and distractions. The 11 and the more trustworthy Brethren had appointed this midnight rendezvous for no purpose but that of quietly considering their condition, cheering each other’s hearts and waiting upon God. They had nothing to buy or sell, or debate upon. They had laid aside business cares and domestic troubles and then their Master came. It is a good thing for the saints to be shut in and the world shut out. I hope we are in that position now. You must not expect Jesus to show Himself to you if your heart is at home with the children, or away at the workshop, or traveling to and fro through the earth, seeking after vanity!

But with the doors all shut about us, even in this great Tabernacle we shall see our Beloved. If we can but shut the world out we may expect to feel His Presence and to have Him breathe upon us as He did upon those of old. Not in the noisy street, but in the quiet chamber, Jesus comes. Not at the market, but in the meeting. Not in the street, but in the sanctuary will His gathered people have their clearest sights of Him.

Having all met together, the next noticeable point as to the Lord’s coming was that *they were all thinking about Him and talking about Him*. The uppermost subject was Jesus whom they had followed as their Master and whom they had seen die—and of whom it was said that He had risen from the dead. I suppose they prayed together, but I am sure their prayers all had reference to Him. I do not think they sang, but if they did, I think they must have selected a Psalm which had an evident allusion to Him. Some of them may have spoken. I have no doubt Simon Peter did, but it must have been to tell how the Lord had revealed Himself to Him and was risen, indeed!

And Magdalene in that quiet assembly may have, again, told of the vision of angels which she saw and how she met the Master and mistook Him for a gardener. And now there come in two Brothers, sweating from their rapid journey from Emmaus, who are just in time before the assembly breaks up to repeat the same gladsome tidings! Everything that night was about Jesus, directly and distinctly about Him. There were no discussions as to doctrines and no questions about ordinances. They spoke wholly of Jesus who died, Jesus who was said to have risen, and they said one to another, is it, indeed, so? Thus while all their hearts and tongues were taken up with Him, Jesus manifested Himself to them.

Now I hope our Lord will come this morning, for I know some who think less and less every day of everything but Jesus. They now account a sermon to be precious or to be vile in proportion as it is full of Him, and reckon a day well spent or ill just in proportion as they have spent it with Him. He is the Alpha and Omega, head, front, chief, Lord, all, yes, All in All to us! And if there are many such present today, you may depend upon it, Jesus will not stay away and we shall feel the delights of His fellowship! Still, someone will say, “Perhaps He will not come here, for there are many barriers and we, ourselves, are not, perhaps, in the very best condition to receive Him.”

Stop, Brothers and Sisters, and ask yourselves—were there no difficulties *then*? The doors were shut and the disciples were in fear. I do not know how Jesus came into the room! Some think He passed through the closed door by miracle, albeit that his body was substantial flesh and bone. Others suggest that He opened the door by miracle and then it closed again. I care not how, but there He was, though the doors were shut! And I know this, that whatever doors there may be between my Lord and my soul, though they were doors made of seven times plated steel, He could pass through them or could open them to get at my heart when it longs after Him!

Brethren, if there are mountains between you and Christ, behold, He comes leaping like a roe or a young hart over the separating hills! *Nothing* can keep Him back from you except yourself—and if you will that He should come—He wills to come and is on His way, even now. No considerations of domestic suffering or of personal pain. No remembrance of the trials of the week, or even the present temptations of Satan shall avail to keep back your Lord and Master! Surely you are aware He can make your soul like the chariots of Amminadab! But perhaps you are afraid He will not visit you because you have a fear which you cannot shake off.

So had the disciples, or they would not have closed the doors so carefully. They feared the Jewish mob which might try to slay them as they had done their Lord! And though you may be fearing the troubles of the week before you, the Lord will not despise you for it. Perhaps some very heavy cloud hangs over your spirit right now. Well, your Lord can pierce through clouds! Does not the sun look forth from the heavens though the morning is lowering and dreary? Shines

he not even though the fogs and mists gather about our city? And Jesus comes, though sins encompass us and doubts and fears and cares hang thick about our path!

He comes as the dew which waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. I see no reason why, now, at this very instant, we may not hear the voice of our Beloved! Blessed Lord, we beseech You to come, for come You can, as well we know! At favored times I have felt as though His very shadow were over me, as though the touch of His right hand were upon me and I heard Him say to me, "Fear not, I am He that lives and was dead." And why not again? Why not now? There are many reasons which make us hope that we shall, this morning, behold Him! Let us look up, and with one hearty cry, "Come, Savior, and reveal Yourself to us now as You do not unto the world!"

II. Secondly, OUR SAVIOR HAD A PECULIAR MANNER WHEN HE WAS COME, so, if He is here, this morning, we may expect Him to be here in something like the following fashion. *He stood* in the midst of them. He stood, suddenly stood—where they had seen no one the moment before—He stood, plainly revealed. He did not flash across the room like a meteor, but He remained in one position as though He meant to tarry for a while. *He stood in the midst*—He took the place which a teacher should occupy, the position which naturally belongs to the Master and Lord.

I rejoice to think of my Lord Jesus as taking the midst of the circle when He visits His Brethren. I love the name of Calvin, but I always regard him as sitting on one side of the room. And I love the name of Wesley, but I regard him as occupying another side place in the assembly. There are many preachers in the Church, but not one of them is in the midst of the family circle of the redeemed. The Lord, alone, is there—the center of all hearts. Others are present and they shine with differing lights, but He is the sun! He is the center and ruler of the system of His Church.

This morning, in addressing you, I stand in body in your midst, but no doubt my preaching does not consort with the experiences and feelings of all present. I must stand on one side, but if my Lord will reveal Himself to you, I am sure we will all give Him the chief place! He will be the center of all our loves and delights. I would not yield precedence to you, Brothers and Sisters, in my desire to honor my Lord as the chief Beloved of my soul, and I feel sure that whatever your condition, you all agree to magnify *Him* and are all glad to look in the same direction, namely, to Him alone. Though our views may sometimes differ, yet our views about Jesus are the same, and our hearts' best affections all unite in Him. Well, then, if He is here, this morning, we shall all feel that we find a common meeting place in Him, that our confidence is in Him, our consecration is to Him, we belong to Him, He belongs to us and we are happiest among the happy because He gathers us all around His loving heart.

When He stands in the midst, the next thing we find is that *He speaks, and His word is*, "*Peace be with you.*" The Presence of Christ, this morning, will be signaled by the bestowal of a deep sense of peace. You will not be able to tell one another why you feel such profound quiet, but it will vividly come before you that Jesus loved you from before the foundations of the world, that your names are engraved upon His hands, that He has bought you with His precious blood, that you are near and dear to Him and that where He is, there you shall be, also, and your souls will feel as if they were more than content. Your experience will be that of the Psalmist when he said, "My soul is even as a weaned child."

It is a glad hour when we need nothing more, but are filled with all the fullness of God! When we can heartily say, "Whom have I in Heaven but You, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside You?" Cares are gone, delight is come, longings are satisfied and desires fall asleep on His bosom, when Jesus is present! No sound of war is in the camp, nor voice of them that mourn. The time of the singing birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. After observing that our Lord spoke, we next find that *He showed*—showed Himself to His disciples. Jesus did not come into their midst to show them a new thought, a philosophic discovery, a deep doctrine, a profound mystery, or, indeed, anything but *Himself*. He was a sacred egoist that day, for what He spoke of was Himself and what He revealed was Himself.

What a sight was that for the disciples! They saw the very Christ! They had seen Him for three years before, but not as one who had been dead and passed through the sepulcher! And now He stood before them, as the First-Begotten from the dead. The most conspicuous things He showed in Himself were His wounds—His hands, His feet, His side. Oh, if my Lord is present here this morning, the chief object of faith's vision will be Himself—and the most conspicuous point in Himself will be the emblems of His passion! The mind cannot contemplate a more blessed object than the wounds of Jesus—founts of redemption, doors of eternal life, sources of hope, scale of Heaven!

Look, you saints, look even now to your crucified Savior! As far as He enables you, come close to Him and put your finger into the nail prints, and say, "My Lord and my God"! Those sacred scars of His are the sure tokens of sin forgiven,

punishment borne by the Substitute and the soul forever emancipated from her slavery! This is what Jesus does when He comes to us in spirit—He makes Himself more dear than ever by fuller and more condescending discoveries of His love, so that we know and believe the love which He has towards us. In so doing *our Lord opens up the Scriptures*. He did so to the eleven. Jesus Christ's Presence is always known by His people by the value and the beauty which they are led to attach to the Scripture at such times.

The Bible is one book in the dark and another book in the light. Do you not, sometimes, take up the Scripture and as you read it, feel that it is like reading any other book, only that it involves a responsibility which another book does not bring upon you? At such seasons you get no sweetness out of it, but rather bitterness. But when Jesus takes the Book, He looses the seven seals and with His finger lights up every line and bids you look, if you will, through the hole in His hand and read the promises in that fashion! Ah, how they glow and glisten! Then the Book talks with you and you detect the Voice to be that of the Beloved Himself!

There is life in the Lord because Christ is there who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—and is, Himself, the eternal Logos, the true Word of God. Yes, Jesus Christ's Presence never teaches a man to despise Scripture and look to inner light, or personal revelation—for much of supposed special revelation is the child of superstition and conceit—whereas in the Scriptures we have a more sure word of testimony. The more light a man has directly from the Spirit, the more he prizes the light of the Spirit in the Word. And the more truly he gets into communion with the unseen Christ, the more does he delight in the Truths of God as revealed to him in the pages of Inspiration. May we know Christ's Presence by that sign and token this morning!

Dear Friends, the Lord's Presence among His followers that day had this peculiarity about it, again, that then *they forgot all their fears*. As He had given them peace with God, so now He puts aside the fear of the Jews and every other fear which had distressed them. They had been frightened, at first. They thought He was a spirit, but now, as they gathered about Him and saw Him eat with them, they gathered around Him as sheep around a shepherd and they felt at home. I am sure, as they went to their houses, they had no fears of Jews as they passed through the midnight streets. And when they reached their doors they felt joyous and light of heart. Whatever their pecuniary circumstances may have been, they had no longer any care, for they had seen the Lord!

Jesus Christ's Presence will be known to you this day by the forgetting of your cares. There is a text in Solomon where he says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and renumber his misery no more." The love of Jesus is that blessed strong drink whose Presence is the wine of which if a man will drink, he shall forget his misery and shall remember his sorrow no more! If Jesus Christ does but give to the man of downcast spirit, the spiced wine of His pomegranate by making him feel that He is near him and that He loves him—if He does but make him conscious that the Redeemer's self is no fiction but a very present Friend and Helper—then whatever the trial may be, he shall bear it readily! The cross shall cease to be a load and the road beneath his pilgrim foot shall become smooth.

Brethren, we cannot enjoy, as yet, the Presence of Christ corporeally, but I have already shown you that all the blessings which His bodily Presence could bestow, we can realize if our Lord, after the same fashion, shall be present with us *spiritually* today.

III. Now thirdly, THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES EXCITED VARIOUS EMOTIONS. These emotions may be excited by His *spiritual* Presence quite as readily. At first they were terrified, for they thought Him a spirit. It is a sad sign of man's depraved nature and of his gross carnality that the presence of a spirit is the source of alarm to him. If we were more spiritual than we are, we should not fear to meet beings of our own order, but should delight to think of the presence of disembodied spirits and should be glad enough to commune with them!

Because the disciples were unspiritual they were alarmed and when the alarm ceased a little, Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" I suppose they began to think of their ill conduct to their Master and conscience made them tremble. We are told by Mark that He also upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart. In gentle tones He chided them for having been so unbelieving and they must have felt this, also, to be a source of troubled thoughts.

Meanwhile they doubted whether it could be the risen Savior. But when they were convinced by indisputable signs, they greatly rejoiced and almost at the same time the very vividness of their joy blinded them into another doubt. Like a

pendulum, they swung from joy to unbelief! After doubt went, they rejoiced, and then wonder came, and then doubt again, so that they scarcely knew where they were, they were in such a state of excitement! John, if you notice, gives a very calm account of it all, for he looked at it rather from Christ's point of view than from the disciples' and, having had his head so lately on Christ's bosom, he was, perhaps, more believing than the rest. Luke's picture of it shows us the contending emotions at work in the breasts of the assembled Brothers and Sisters, for Luke was a physician and accustomed to watch symptoms and phases of feeling. He looked at it from the human side and, therefore, he gives us a fuller description of the tossing to and fro, the hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, questions and comforts of the hour.

Well, we will leave the 11 and come to ourselves. Suppose, a moment, that our Lord were actually to appear among us this morning? I will not say I wish He would, because we know Him no more after the flesh and there is no blessing which His corporeal Presence could bestow but what we have already in His spiritual Presence. But if He were to come, my Brethren, what would be our state of mind towards Him? I hope we should not be terrified. I think the most of us who believe in Him would be more likely to be overjoyed than at all frightened, but I am sure we should all be filled with *the profoundest awe*.

The sight of HIM! Our Master and Lord! Should we not, like John in Patmos, fall at His feet as dead? Would not the bliss of that vision be too great for these frail bodies? At any rate, we would devoutly bow the knee before Him and reverently adore Him! And oh what adoration would we give to the Lamb that once was slain! To that dear and ever blessed Son of God who has washed us from our sins in His own blood! Brethren, we would turn this Tabernacle into a temple and this hallowed hour into a fragment of Heaven's eternity! If our Lord would but come here and show Himself among us, what overflowing love should He have from us! How would our hearts melt while He spoke! Brothers and Sisters, He is here!

Let us give that loving adoration to Him even now! Let us bow before Him and with prostrate reverence of heart worship the Divine Son! Why should it not be so? Brethren, may the Holy Spirit lead you into the depths of devotion now! I have no doubt we should feel a marvelous degree of serene joy to think that at length we were with our Lord. When we went home and told our friends who were not here, we would say to them, "We have had some sweet Sundays, but we have never before had such a Lord's-Day as this, for He who is Alpha and Omega walked among us and spoke with us! We forgot Brother Spurgeon—he went back to his seat and held his head in delight—we thought no more about him, for his Lord absorbed our attention! The joy we had in seeing Jesus was worth waiting for."

Well, dear Friends, we shall not have our Lord's crucified body here so as to feel peace from the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears, but He is here, really. And all the facts which cluster around His Presence which would be legitimate reasons for peaceful joy, we have already, for He has died and redeemed us and He has gone into His Glory! And remember, He is pleading for us and He is coming again to take us Home to Himself! These are, by His Grace, the fundamental reasons for peace. We have all the real causes of joy that we should have if the Man of Nazareth did stand in our midst! Therefore let us be calmly glad and wholly at rest this morning. God help us to be so!

Surely, also, many would be melted down with *deep contrition* in our Redeemer's Presence. Some of us would have to say, "Lord and Master, have You come to ask an account of our stewardship? We are ashamed to look You in the face, we have done so little for You." There is one who might say, "I have been a member of a Church for years, but I have neither helped in the school, preached in the villages, visited the sick nor rendered any service whatever. I have eaten the fat and drank the sweet in the House of the Lord, but that is all that I have done." Brothers and Sisters, here, before the spiritually present Lord you may make the same confessions and be humbled on account of them. I wish you would.

Though Jesus is not here with that dear face to tenderly chide you, yet He is here, by His blessed Spirit, to gently remind you of your forgotten obligations. By His wounds and by His bloody sweat, I do entreat you to be loiterers no longer, but go work in His vineyard and cease not till life's sun goes down! "Ah," says one, "but if our Lord were here, I would tell Him my great trouble and ask for His sympathy and help. I would come to His feet and beseech Him to save my husband and to convert my ungodly son." Do it, Sister, do it NOW, for He will hear you as assuredly as if we heard His footsteps in these aisles!

His Spirit, who has put the desire into your soul, is the pledge of His Presence. Breathe the prayer and expect the blessing and your expectation shall not fail. I hear another Believer cry out, "Ah, if my Lord were here before me, I would pour out my glad soul in praise and tell Him how I love Him! I would kiss His feet and wash them with my tears."

Do it NOW, my Friend, for though you have not the flesh and blood of Christ present, yet Jesus in *spirit* is here and though His body is up in Glory, yet your tears and thankfulness will reach Him and be as acceptable to Him as if He were here in body! Even now His heart will accept the emotions of your soul! Let them flow out before Him as perfume from the flowers.

“Ah,” says one, “if I did but see the Lord I should leave this morning’s assembly feeling that I could now lead a higher life than ever I had led before. I could not look at Him without saying, ‘You altogether lovely One, I pledge myself to You, for You to live, for You to die and all I have and all I am shall be Yours forever.’” Beloved, do it unrestrainedly and unfeignedly even NOW! Do it now, I say, for He will just as well accept you, looking out from the Glory Land above, as though He looked down upon you from this platform!

I wonder what the scene would be with some hypocrites who are present, if Christ were to come. Ah, how they would wish they had never made a profession of religion! Oh Judas, Judas, how would you bear to see the risen glory of Him whom you betrayed? Are you here this morning, Judas? And you, vacillating Pilate, who knew the right but did the wrong—how will you meet the Man in whom you found no fault but yet condemned to die? There may be many here who have despised Him, who have reviled His people and ridiculed His Gospel, albeit that Jesus shed His blood for the sons of men!

Well, although Jesus is not here in body, yet will He soon come in Person to judge the quick and dead! And if you dare not meet Him now, how will you meet Him then? Thus says the Lord, prepare for His advent, for behold He comes to judge mankind, and woe onto those who shall be found wanting in the day of His appearing.

IV. The last thing of all is this. Jesus Christ, when He came among His disciples, LEFT CERTAIN PERMANENT GIFTS which also can be realized by His *spiritual* Presence. One of the most precious gifts He left them was *the realization of His Person*. Those who saw Him that day never thought of Him, from then on, as a mere historical person, or a dream, or a phantom. You have read a great many histories but you have never realized the persons of history as you have realized your own father and mother and children. But the disciples must have realized Christ, for they saw Him and some of them touched Him and put their finger into the print of the nails.

Now, it is very desirable that we should, all of us, realize the reality of Jesus Christ as God and Man, and we can do it, this morning, if He will come and overshadow us with His Presence. There are some of us to whom Christ has been a world more real than ourselves, for we have sometimes scarcely known whether we were in the body or out of the body, when He has been near. But we have always known whether *He* was in the body or out of the body. We have felt as if wife and father and mother were shadows that would pass away—but we have realized the eternal existence of Christ and have known that He could not pass away. And so *spiritually* we have grasped Him more firmly than we have our own friends and kin.

The most real thing under Heaven to my soul is the Lord Jesus Christ! Brethren, can you all say that? If you can, then Christ has been present with you this morning. I do not say that I can use this language always. Alas, alas, when my Lord has gone, it is not so with me! But when I know He is near, there is no force that does so completely constrain me, no impulse that does so utterly hold me spellbound as the impulse that arises from His Presence, and the magnificence that flows out of His love shed abroad in my soul. Every child of God knows it is so and thus it is clear that without seeing Christ with the eyes, you can obtain the blessing of *realizing* Him.

Next He gave to them all *a commission*, He said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” He has never laid His hand on your shoulder, my Brother, and said, “Go and tell the Gospel to poor sinners.” He has never touched you, my Sister, and said, “Woman, I have sent you to bring your companions to Me. Go and tell them of My love!” No, but He has virtually done it by the commission which He gave to all His disciples! And He does it powerfully and specially by His Spirit to many of us whenever we realize His Presence. We cannot sit down at the feet of Christ without feeling that we must work for Him! I defy any man to live near Christ and to be lazy! Our Lord walks a smart pace and if you will keep company with Him you must go His rate. But if you loiter and linger and waste time, Christ will be on ahead and leave you to yourself.

I pray Him to commission some of you this morning! I tried last Sunday morning to call out young heroes for Christ. I do not know whether the Lord called them out by me or not, but I pray that Jesus would do it! If today He should appear, the Crucified One, with face more marred than that of any man—with pierced hands, with side opened by the deep

gash—if He should speak personally to each of you, and say, “My Son, My Daughter, go and serve Me, from this day, until I come,” with what energy would you go forth to His service, even if it were to the ends of the earth!

The last gift He gave them was *He breathed on them*. His breath was the Spirit of God. This was the first drop of the shower of the Spirit which afterwards was shed so plenteously at Pentecost. He breathed on them and though they did not get the fullness of the Spirit, yet they obtained a measure of it and they became qualified to fulfill their commission. Oh that He would breathe the Spirit upon us now! No, we need not ask for it, Beloved, for our Lord has given the Spirit once and for all to all His people! He has baptized His Church into the Holy Spirit and into fire—and the Spirit remains with us always—only you must believe the might which that Spirit bestows upon you.

Oh Brother, oh Sister, I beseech you do not estimate yourself according to *your* ability, according to *your* experience, *your* learning and the like, but according to that Divine energy which rests upon you if you are called of God to service! What are the powers within? They are feebleness itself! But the power from *above* is the power of *God!* Gird on this mystic belt, this Divine Omnipotence, and if you know how to wear it by faith, you shall break through a troop and leap over a wall. “All things are possible to him that believes.”

May Jesus Christ, then, may His Spirit be so among us that each one of us may be conscious of obtaining a fresh anointing this very morning! And in that strength we shall go forth to new service for the glory of God. May God bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 16:9-16; Luke 24:36-44; John 20:19-24.

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