THE PREACHER'S LAST SERMON FOR THE SEASON

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A SERMON
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"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."
John 7:37

THE officers were after our Lord, and He knew it. He could spy them out in the crowd, but He was not therefore in the least bit afraid, or disconcerted. He reminds me of that minister who, when he was about to preach, was stopped by a soldier, who held a pistol to his head, and threatened that if he spake he would kill him.

"Soldier," said he, "do your duty, and I shall do mine." And he went on with his preaching. The Savior, without saying as much in words, said so by His actions. If they were sent to take Him, let them take Him—as for Himself, the time was come to speak boldly, and therefore He stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

You see, it was the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. From the middle of that festival the Lord had been present, and had openly taught the people, and they had seen Him in the midst of the throng, lifting up His hands, and proclaiming holy doctrine. But the feast was over, the boughs were cleared away, and the tents in which they had dwelt for a time, were taken down.

It was the eighth day, which was spent as a Sabbath, but the Savior did not cease to preach because the festival was almost over. Till the last day He continued to instruct, invite, and entreat. How this reminds us of His constant patience! It is but one instance, out of very many, of the Savior's tenacity of loving-kindness.

Though the Jews had often refused Him, He is still pleading with them. He has come to His own, and they have not received Him. But He waits to be gracious. He tarries in unwearied mercy. He endures "even to this last," and so, on "that great day of the feast," He has still a note of admonition, and a word of invitation for them.

Oh, the patience of God to some here present! You have long heard the Gospel, and although you have never given it due attention, still does the good Savior strive with you, and press you to be considerate of your own best interests. Jesus urges you to live, persuades you to be saved. There are times when it would not be becoming to the honor of a king to press his favors upon those who have distinctly despised and refused them. But it is always the singular glory of our Lord Jesus Christ that He continues to entreat even when we continue to resist.

Even to our own last hour does the Lord of mercy sweetly cry, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Repent, dear hearer, of all your long delays, and come to Jesus this day, for He still invites you, saying evermore, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Furthermore, our Lord did not only preach the Gospel till the last day of the feast, but because it was the last day, He manifested an increased ardor in so doing, and whereas His custom was to *sit* and teach the people who gathered in a ring around Him, on this closing day He now sought a prominent place, probably just outside the Temple, or in one of its outer courts, and there He *stood*, conspicuous before them all, in the attitude of one who has risen from his ease, and has come to meet those whom he invites.

He assumed a position more active, more pleading, more earnest, than that of a seated teacher. Behold, He stands and pleads! That pleading is in tones both pathetic and loud—He "cries," "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

It is the last time that He will look into some of their faces. They are going back from Jerusalem, where they have kept the feast. They will get back to their farms and to their merchandise, and if He does not strike the iron while He has it on the anvil, He may never have another stroke at it. If at this time an invitation is not pressed upon them, they will forget the teaching they have heard—they will probably never hear any more—and they will die in their sins.

I think I see the Master's face beaming with holy affection, and His eyes streaming with tears, as He pleads as for His life with the throng which is so soon to melt away. It is now or never with Him, and with them. He must once more free Himself of the blood of them all, and therefore on that "last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

I think it is noteworthy that, when the Master had gathered up all the forces of His soul, and His whole spirit was moved with intense anxiety for the good of men, then He especially preached the Gospel of salvation. I do not know that He had before so publicly declared Himself as the great fountain and source of salvation.

He had taught this truth to the woman at the well of Samaria with special plainness, and He had spoken of it to different little companies with great distinctness. But now almost for the first time on this last day He brings it all out before the multitude, and cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Now is the invitation given most freely. Now is the cry sounded forth most loudly. O you that are perishing, O you that are lost, O you that want salvation, here is the place where you can find it—"Come unto me, and drink!"

It seems to me that the Lord Jesus was driving only at this one thing—the getting of men to come to Himself. At another time He would teach them deeper doctrine, or truth of a wider range, for His ministry dealt with many things for edification and holiness. But now, on this last day, He seems to put other matters on one side, and His one object is to win thirsty souls to come to Him and drink.

I have deep fellowship in that spirit this morning. I remember that I shall not have another morning's discourse with you for some time, and perhaps I may never have another. I go from you for a season, and my voice will be silent among you. Therefore I said within my heart that I would preach this morning upon the one subject of coming to Christ—and upon nothing else.

If you make mistakes about a thousand things, it will be very sad that you should do so—but not so sad as if you fell into an error upon this matter. If, peradventure, you should not know this or that, it may be greatly to your detriment, but nothing compared with not knowing the Lord Jesus. My brethren and sisters, if you really come to Jesus, and assuage the thirst of your souls by drinking of that living water, which He so freely gives, the main thing will be right, the chief thing will be secured. We will hope that all the rest will come right by and by, but just now we will only look to that vital point.

O you that thirst, come unto Christ, and drink. And if you do so, our morning's work will be fraught with untold blessedness to you! In my absence this shall be my solace, that my last words won your souls for Jesus.

I would further call your attention to this fact, that while the Lord, on that last day, displayed an extraordinary ardor for men's souls, and preached the Gospel more fully then than ever, He especially drove at this point, that they should come to Himself. He spoke more pointedly, clearly, and exclusively of Himself than ever, for, just in proportion as He preached the Gospel, it was of necessity that He became a witness to Himself, since there is no other Gospel than that which is wrapped up in His own proper person and work.

The more Gospel, the more Christ, and the more Christ, the more Gospel. So, when our Lord says, If any man thirst, there is water to be had, He can do no other than say, "Let him come unto me, and drink." If that word must come forth from our Lord's own lips, how abundantly it ought to come from

ours! Jesus stands up to be, Himself a center, not alone for a congregation of people who hear Him, but for a crowd of thirsty folk who are to drink of Him. Jesus is the central sun of salvation, and from Him the true light radiates on all sides. All who will turn their eyes to look unto Him shall behold the light of life.

Beloved hearers, I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God as God has made it known to me. Yet I do feel this morning that I would gladly let all other truth sink for the while, if I might but so preach my Lord Jesus that every unconverted person here might see Him, and look to Him with the glance of faith.

I desire also that every converted person may again look to Jesus, and continue steadily to look until the glance of faith on earth shall melt into the vision of happiness in heaven. What a morning this would be if we all hastened to Jesus, and drank from Him as from the sparkling fountain of grace! Why should we not?

"Jesus stood, and cried," and His most ardent passion led Him to cry concerning Himself, that men should come to Him, and find in Him the supply for all their spiritual need. The more we love our fellow men, the more we, too, shall tell them of Jesus, and of Jesus, only.

This text I shall try to handle on this last Sabbath among you. May the Spirit of God handle it so as to make it useful to you one and all!

I. Notice, in the text, THE INQUIRY FOR THE THIRSTY.

Jesus stands amidst that mass of people from every land—the mingled tribes, scattered far and wide—who came up to Jerusalem to keep the feast, and He cries among them, "If any man thirst." Evidently, He is seeking out needy, restless, longing hearts.

Observe that He starts with *a very wide inquiry*—He seeks for any man, and consequently for every man, that thirsts. So does the Gospel at this hour come with a generous and wide appeal. Have you any desire after God? Have you any will to be rid of your sin? Have you any anxiety to escape from the wrath to come? Have you any weariness after Jesus, and the rest which only He can give?

Do you desire to be made pure? Is there a heart in you which sighs after better things? Do you long after a higher, and holier, and more heavenly life? Well, whoever you may be, Jesus says, "Come unto me, and drink."

There gathered that day about the Temple, not only men of Judea and Galilee, but Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia. In fact, all sorts of people, even as on the day of Pentecost, came up to keep the feast, and without making any exception whatever in His generous invitation, our good Master stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Beneath the arch of heaven that same call sounds out to every thirsty soul of every clime. Wherever the sound of my voice is heard this morning, and wherever the printed sermon will be read, a sincere invitation comes, without exception, to every soul that longs and thirsts after God, and pardon, and mercy, and eternal life, and heaven—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Do not turn away from this honest invitation to eternal life.

Yet there wails through our text an undertone of grief by which *it is anxiously narrowed down*. Wide as the invitation is, yet that "If," spoken in tenderly solemn tones of apprehension, reminds us that many are called, but few are chosen. "*If* any man thirst"—as if He had said, "The mass of you do not thirst—do any of you thirst? The multitudes do not thirst—only one here and there is doing so."

Our Lord's glance sweeps over the throng. He reads their indifference, and spiritual death, and in plaintive accents expresses His fear that none, at least very few, are thirsting. Alas, the truly thirsty are as few as flowers in winter! Self-content possesses the minds of many, and world-contentment steals over others.

They are in a desert. No drop of dew falls about them, and the water bottle that they carry has long since been dry. But they are mocked by a mirage, and they put aside their thirst with the fond idea that when they will they can drink to the full. An evil spirit has made them mad, and they own not the thirst which devours them.

You may tell them of sin, and its danger, but they do not desire to confess it—their conscience is asleep. You talk of hell, and all its terrors, but either they do not believe you, or else they are so callous that they will risk an eternity of woe for the sake of a poor transient pleasure. You speak of Christ and pardon bought with blood, but what is that to them? They go their way after the trifles of time and sense—and the great realities of eternity do not trouble them.

"If any man thirst." Alas, a spiritually thirsty soul is a choice rarity! Where shall I find him? With what joy will I salute him! He is the man who will gladly receive the tidings of Jesus and His love.

The mass of the people are bereft of spiritual feeling—they neither hunger nor thirst after righteousness—but they have given themselves up to enjoy the brutish lives of oxen, or of dogs. They live as if the whole of their existence were to be spent amid the shadows of this poor, benighted world, and as if there would never dawn upon our immortal natures an everlasting day. Such brutish men have no expectation of a resurrection, no fear of a judgment to come, no hope of heaven, and no dread of hell. Well does the weeping Savior put it, "If any man thirst."

The invitation is in itself wide, and is only focused by the deep sorrow of the Preacher. If any man thirst, he is bidden to come to Jesus. If you, O man, have stolen in here this morning, discontented with the pleasures of the world, you are bid to come to Jesus for rest and satisfaction. If you are rich and increased in goods, and yet are quite unable to enjoy your riches because your heart cannot be satisfied with the world, you are he to whom this invitation comes.

If you are heavy with the burden of sin, if you would give your eyes to be rid of it, if you are despairing, and ready to die, because your struggles after better things have all been failures—you are he whom the Lord Jesus invites. With loving tenderness He puts it to all of you who want everything, but have no joy of anything, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." O man, if you have any sort of spiritual desire, any kind of longing after that which is good and gracious, come at once to Jesus, and Jesus will joyfully receive you.

The call is painfully clear. "If any man thirst." The thirsty know what thirst is—it is a self-explaining pain. A man knows whether he thirsts or not. Nobody need take a minute to answer the question, "Do I thirst?" because as to natural thirst, it is a pain or want which is readily discerned. If, my hearer, you are really thirsty, you know you are thirsty. Are you dissatisfied with yourself? Are you grieved on account of sin? Are you anxious to be right with God? Are you pining to find your Savior? You are the man, and there is no question about it. Hear His voice while He graciously says, "Come unto me, and drink."

Be it remembered that *this call is being continually repeated.* At this moment, though I speak it, my Master is with me, and is using me as His mouth. Jesus Himself says it, and not I—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Jesus is not standing outside the Temple at Jerusalem, for He is gone from us, as to His bodily presence. But from yonder lofty place at the right hand of God He still speaks, and He cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Jesus is still accessible. You may come to Him at this hour. A prayer will bring you to Him. A sigh will find and reach Him. And if beneath the arch of heaven, in hall or cottage, in palace or prison, in the forest or on the sea, there is a man that thirsts, let him but come unto Jesus by faith, and he shall have all his needs supplied. It is a blessed invitation, standing good at this hour to you, O friend! Yea, it will hold good even to a man's dying day, and this may be to you that very day. Jesus has not ceased to invite, nor will He cease to receive all that come to Him.

Do you ask me again, "What is this thirst?" Thirst is nothing actual, or substantive—it is a lack, a want crying out of its emptiness. It is the absence of a necessary. Sinner, you need not look for any good thing in yourself—the thirst which is sought for is the absence of a good thing. Thirst is a painful need. Have you not needs? Thirst is an emptiness, a vacuum—it is the miss of that which is essential to life. Have you not such a void?

Thirst is conscious need, conscious to a painful degree—have you not this? This sense of need is your thirst. The need naturally begets a pain. When our system needs drink, a merciful providence creates a pang so that we are driven to take notice that a requisite of life must be immediately supplied.

Thirst rings the alarm, and the mind and body set to work to supply the urgent demand. It were a dreadful thing if the system needed water and yet did not thirst, for we might be fatally injured before we knew that any harm was happening to us. The pain of thirst is a salutary warning that something very important is wanted.

Now, soul, if you are suffering from fear or despondency—if you endure heaviness of heart, and disquietude of spirit—if you have a longing, a sighing, a pining after something better and holier, then you are thirsty. If you have this thirst in any measure or degree, you are bidden to come to Christ and drink. If you have not as yet a burning thirst, nor a fever, but if you have any sort of thirst, you may come and drink.

If you do in any measure long for mercy and renewal, you are included in this invitation, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Do not look within yourself to find any good thing. Is thirst a good thing? No, thirst is an evil thing to be removed. And if you see in yourself only evil things to be removed, you have all that Jesus sets forth in this text as the description of those whom He permits to come to Himself. He says so much, and no more—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

I wonder whether I have found out the thirsty person this morning? Are you sitting upstairs in the top gallery? Or are you among the thicker company below? Where are you? Find yourself out now. Turn your eye inwardly—look not to your neighbor, but say within your own soul, "Yes, I thirst. Perhaps not as I should, but still I do desire. I am uneasy, I have an unrest, there is an absence of good in me. Oh, that my thirst were satisfied this morning!"

Friend, you are my man! Before we go further, let me salute you, and say, "Man, my brother," or "Woman, my sister, the Lord Jesus says unto you, 'Come unto me, and drink.'"

Thus much upon the inquiry after the thirsty ones.

II. Here is, secondly, THE ONE DIRECTION FOR THE RELIEF OF ALL SUCH THIRSTY ONES—"Let him come unto me, and drink."

There is one direction, and that one direction points solely to one source. All who would have their thirst relieved must come to one fountain, to one Jesus. Observe, that *Christ, who gives the water which quenches spiritual thirst, directs us to come to Himself personally*. Do notice this. "Let him come unto me, and drink."

Do you ask, "What creed am I to believe, what doctrines am I to receive?" We will tell you of this by and by, but just now He that is set before you this morning is a Person—the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time when He spoke this text He had not been crucified, nor dead, nor buried, nor raised from the dead, but the text was spoken with a foresight of all this, as you will see by reading two verses further on, where we are told that what Christ said took for granted His death and resurrection. "The Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

In this verse our Lord speaks as if He had been dead, and had risen, and had been glorified. So then, O soul, if your thirst is to be assuaged, you must come to Jesus the Son of God, who became the Son of man, who lived, who took human sin upon Himself, and died for it, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Who, being dead, was taken down from the cross, and laid in the grave, where He slept a little while, and then arose from among the dead into newness of life, and after forty days ascended on high, leading captivity captive!

At this hour He sits at the right hand of God, all power being given unto Him in heaven and in earth. In His glory He is this day able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. You must come to Him who has finished His redeeming work, and ever lives to make intercession for us. And if you will come to Him, He will give you the full supply of all the great needs of your nature.

O, my hearer, whatever your spiritual desire is, Jesus will grant it. Whatever, in fact, your soul requires between this place and glory, He will give it to you. But you must come to Him for it, and to Him alone. You must come distinctly *to Him*, and not to ceremonies, or sacraments, or priests, or churches, or assemblies, or creeds, or services, or doings, or feelings.

You are not to eat or drink of the house, or of the servants—but the Master Himself gives you Himself to be your bread from heaven. Your salvation lies in that divine Person, whom by faith I see at this moment, clothed in the splendor of heaven, yet still wearing the marks of His passion. He looks like a lamb that has been slain. He presents a perpetually complete atonement, and continually reconciles sinners to God. There lies your hope, and there alone. In that Person, I say, and in that Person only is salvation.

All that a sinner needs is to be found in abundance in Jesus. The Lord Jesus invites all who feel their thirst to come to Him and partake, feeling no diffidence as to His ability to meet all their cases. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Though your thirst is like that of a panting ox upon a sultry summer's day, who puts down his mouth to the brook, and drinks as though he would leave it dry—you may come and feel no trembling as to the sufficiency of the living waters.

Ay, you may come in your dozens, your scores, your hundreds, your thousands, your millions, and your hundreds of millions! There shall never be a time when the Lord Jesus shall bid the thirsty stay away because the current of His grace is exhausted. He said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," without stint or measure. There is nothing to limit the draught or question the supply. In Jesus there is such a fullness that it never will be exhausted. Sin may be exhausted, the race may be numbered, time may be finished, and need may be ended, but mercy endures forever.

There is in Christ Jesus a varied supply. The thirst of the soul is not like the thirst of the body, which is readily quenched by any one liquid, for the thirst of the soul is for many things. Whatsoever many things the soul thirsts for, Jesus will supply them all. Our wonderful variety of wants is met by His wonderful variety of excellences.

Here is a soul that wants peace—"this Man shall be the peace." "I am unhinged. I am almost driven to distraction. I am sorely troubled, so that I cannot sleep." You shall have rest by coming to Jesus—"He gives his beloved sleep."

"But I am so guilty. I have sinned past all pardon. I blush to think how grievously I have trespassed." You can have pardon for all your sins, though they be as glaring as scarlet, and though for number they be as many as the sands of the sea. In Jesus the penitent finds perfect pardon for all his offenses. Believe you this? It is certainly so. God will cast all your transgressions into the depths of the sea, if you believe in the Lord Jesus.

How happy is the man who, by faith in Jesus, knows that the Lord has fully and freely forgiven Him! "But I want purity," cries a third. "I am troubled with horrible thoughts. I have a strong passionate nature, which draws me into wrong desires. I have been a drunkard. I have been unchaste. I have been given to the use of foul language, and these things are a source of continued defilement."

Oh, my friend, you can get rid of all this, if you desire to do so, by coming to Jesus! He will give you a new heart, and a right spirit. He will change your nature totally, so that this evil shall never more have dominion over you. But where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound. Do you hear this? All purity is in Christ for you.

"But I," says one, "desire to make progress. I hope I am right, and I want to be more right. I want to make advances in the divine life, so as to honor God, and bless my fellow men." Come, then, to the Lord Jesus, and drink, for He gives life, and gives it more abundantly.

"But I want," says a Christian, "power in prayer, and power to convince and convert my fellow men." Come then to Jesus for it. Concerning this also He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." He will make you strong upon your knees, and mighty in holy service, if you will but surrender your will to Him.

"But I want perseverance," cries another. "I can scarcely hold on my way. I am hard put to it. I faint even though I resolve to pursue." Come to Him, then, for persevering grace. "He will keep the feet of his saints." Find your strength to stand, and your ability to endure, in Him alone. If any man thirst for anything that is really desirable, let Him come to Jesus, in whom all right desires are provided for. All for sinners and all for saints will be found in Jesus our Lord, who is all in all.

Still remember that *it is to Jesus only that you must come*—and you must bring nothing of your own with you. All you are bidden to do lies in these two things—*come* and *drink*. Christ is accessible, and you may *come* to Him. He does not stand with a gulf between Him and you, mockingly crying, "Come." No, but He comes where you are today, in all your misery and sin, and He sweetly whispers, "Come."

Arise, then, for He calls you. He shortens the way for you. Nay, He is Himself the Way. He comes to you, and He says, "Come to me," not because there is now a vast distance to traverse, but because there is only a step, and He would have you take it at once. Do but trust Him and you have come to Him. This coming is not so much an exercise of power, as the resignation of power. Submit yourself to Jesus. Yield to Him. Be willing that He should be everything to you, and you have truly come to Him.

Then you are told to *drink*. That is not a difficult action. Any fool can drink. In fact, many are great fools because they drink too much of poisonous liquors. Drinking is peculiarly the common-place act of sinners.

"Drink!" Surely you can do that. You have only to be as a sponge that sucks up all that comes near it. To drink is the act of a babe, a sick man, a wounded deer, or even a little chick. Put your mouth down, and suck up that which flows to you in the river of Christ's love. See how a babe newborn drinks from its mother's breast—be you as that weak babe, and take in Christ according to your capacity.

He bids you receive Him—why hesitate? You are not to bring anything to Jesus, but to take everything from Him, as the thirsty ground opens its mouth, and drinks in the showers, many as they may be. Open wide your soul, and drink in Christ, as the great northern whirlpool sucks in the sea. Pull up the sluices, and let streams of mercy flow through you in glorious torrents. It is all He bids you do. It is, in fact, to do nothing but to receive your God. If any man thirst, let Him receive Christ.

This, then, is the one direction for the assuagement of the burning thirst of all sin-sick souls.

III. Consider, in the third place, THE PERMISSION HERE GIVEN FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION.

I have told you where the water is, but the question comes, "May I drink of it?" If you thirst, drink. No limit is placed in our text. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." *There is no limit as to what you have formerly done.* "Oh, but I have been so guilty, so hardened. I have uttered bitter words. I have even spoken against God and His Christ. I have denied the deity of our Lord. I have gone aside into all manner of crooked ways!"

Whatever you have done, if you have now any longing after God and your Savior, come you freely, just as you are, for He bids you come and drink. "But I dare not say what I have done, sir." You need not say it to me—it were better you should not. Confess it to God alone, and though you be black as seven midnights, and foul as seven hells, you may come to Jesus just as you are, and receive from Him complete absolution. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Neither is there any limit put as to where you have gone before. I remember one who wanted to purchase a certain article, and he called upon one of the chief merchants, and asked his price. When this was given him, he went his way to half-a-dozen other traders, and tried to buy at a cheaper rate. He did not succeed, but on the contrary, he found that the first had quoted the lowest price.

When he walked a second time into that shop, his advances were not welcomed. "No," said the merchant, "I shall not serve you now—you have been all round the town, and if you could have got it a farthing cheaper, you would not have been here. I don't care for such customers."

It is not thus with our Lord Jesus. He makes and keeps a free trade in grace. If you have gone to Moses, if you have gone to Rome, if you have gone to a priest or father confessor—yea, if you have gone to the devil—yet still you may come to Christ. Do not fear a refusal. He still says, "If any man thirst"—though he has been to all the wells on earth, and found them dry, still this well is full, and he is permitted to drink at it. "Let him come unto me, and drink."

There is no limit because of any kind of lack. "Oh," says one, "I am deficient in tenderness. I am deficient in patience." Whatsoever you are deficient in, so much the greater is your thirst, but the Lord meets that thirst in all respects. If any man lacks anything, the Lord will supply that lack. If any man be

conscious that he has a great and grievous lack of that which is most essential, as when one has need of water which is essential to life, let him come to Christ and drink.

"Surely," says one, "I cannot be intended, for I am in peculiar circumstances. I am very old." Come and drink, if you have any thirst, though you be as old as Methuselah. "But I am so poor." The poorer you are, the more welcome you are. Come you, in your smock frock, and drink.

"But I cannot read." Never mind. The text does not say, "Read," but "Drink." At the polling booths many are met who cannot read, but none who cannot drink. I have known some that could not read a letter who could drink a churnful—drinking is an ability which is very widely distributed.

The power to receive is scarcely a power, and yet it is the only power needed for salvation. Come along, and take what Christ does freely give you. "Alas, I am so different from others!" Does the text say that any are shut out because they are different from others? No. Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink"

Sorrowfully I notice that some are ingeniously trying to lock the door against themselves with the very key that was meant to open it. "Alas," one cries, "I am *afraid I do not thirst*!" Tell me, then, what is the matter with you?

"Sir, I have not such a sense of need as I ought to have." That is to say, you are sensible that you are more needy than you think you are. If you are conscious that you are not fully aware of all your need, then I urge you to come to Jesus, just as you are, for if ever there was a thirsty soul, you are one. You even need a sense of need—and this proves that you are horribly in need. You are neediest among the needy, and should be among the first to come.

"I am afraid I do not thirst." Tell me, would you come if you did thirst? "That I would." Then come at once, and none will cast you out, because when you come, it will be clear that you must have thirsted, for none ever comes to Jesus who do not thirst. I am reasoning with you in a roundabout way, as you do with me.

"But I want to thirst more." Then come and drink, and you shall thirst more—that is to say, you shall know more of your need of Christ than you do now, for they that find Christ value Christ more than those who, as yet, have never found Him. Come if you thirst, and come if you think you do not thirst, but wish you did thirst, for that wish to thirst is the very thirst you wish for.

The sense that you have no proper sense of need is the very best sense that can be. Your want of a power to feel your want is your greatest want. Consciousness of your own unconsciousness is the truest consciousness. Your groaning because you cannot groan is the deepest groaning that ever is groaned.

Therefore, come along with you. Keep not back through shame or fear, for Jesus will give you a hearty welcome, and supply everything you can possibly require. The more unfit you feel yourself to be, the more are you invited to come—your very unfitness is your fitness for coming to Jesus. It is not what you have that God asks for, but He invites you to bring before Him what you have not, that He may meet your pressing need, and give you all things to enjoy.

He takes advantage of your poverty in a blessed manner. You know how *men* do with one another—if they find a man utterly reduced, they grind him down still more. Now, the Lord takes advantage of your poverty to lift you up. The less there is in you that is good, the more you need a Savior, and the more readily does that Savior present Himself to you.

If you are starved to the last extremity, and if there is not a drop of oil in the cruse, nor a handful of meal in the barrel, only look to Christ, and He will spread your table with food convenient for you. Only confess your emptiness, and all His fullness is at your disposal.

There is one thing I should like you to think of, and that is, when Christ says, "Come unto me, and drink," *nobody else can say you nay*, for surely the Lord Jesus is master of Himself, and His warrants run in His own kingdom. If He says, "Come unto me," who is to keep you away? If you were master of a large estate, and said to a poor man, "Walk round it, go where you please"—and if your bailiff should meet this person, and warn him off as a trespasser, would you not expect the poor man to say, "Your master gave me permission, and I will not be driven off by you"?

So, if the devil, or conscience, or anything else, says to you, "You must not hope in divine mercy, nor in any other way lay hold of Christ," you may boldly reply, "Your Master said I might. Jesus Himself said, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.' I thirsted, I came, and I received—and I will never give up what I have received. For I have Christ's permission to have it, and keep it I will."

Oh, how I wish these words of encouragement would meet the cases of many before me! I thought I would have a full house this morning, and if it had been fine weather we would have been densely crowded. But when I saw it raining so very heavily I fancied we would have comparatively few, and perhaps it would be better to change the topic.

But I said, "Never mind, I will preach the same sermon to the few as to the many," because I recollect the morning when I found the Savior myself. It was as wet and miserable a morning as the present one, and moreover, the ground was covered with a deep snow. Sleet was falling fast, and the wind was blowing bitterly.

I had intended to go to another place of worship half a mile further on, but I could not reach it through stress of weather, else I would not have turned into the little Primitive Chapel. I do not suppose there were more than twenty people present that morning, but it did not matter. That poor man's morning's work was satisfactory, for the Lord blessed a youth who has since then preached to many thousands.

Among a few the best success may yet be gained. Perhaps, this morning, I am to catch some souls who will be useful to multitudes of others. Yonder young man who has come here, he hardly knows why, is to be decided for Jesus. He would not have been here if it had not been so wet. He is the very man the Lord has need of, and when he is converted he shall be used for the Lord's glory.

At any rate, from this pulpit rings out the blessed invitation with trumpet voice, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

IV. We close with THE ENTREATY FOR THEIR COMING.

Jesus pleads with them to come. "Jesus stood and cried." I cannot picture the enthusiasm of His soul, the passion of His heart, as He spoke that morning. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." The tones of that pleading voice were both striking and wooing, forcible and tender. When, on that last occasion, He addressed the people, He poured out His whole soul pleading with them that they would come to Him then and there.

Dear hearts, when I think of Christ entreating us to come, I am astonished that we should need such pleading, and that He should give it. Surely the shoe should be on the other foot. Ought we not to entreat Him to let us come? Should we not fall on our knees, and plead for permission to receive the Savior? Instead of that, we are cold and callous, and it is He that is eager for us to come. He loves us better than we love ourselves! When a man has charity to give away, does he entreat people to come and accept it? No, but they come, and knock at his door, and beg him to give it to them.

How strange is this, that you should be unwilling, and Christ anxious. That you should be backward, and Christ forward. That Jesus should cry, "Come," and you should sit still and decline His calls! Should you not come when Jesus Himself invites, and even entreats? Is it not baseness? Is it not gross hardness of heart if we do not receive Him who speaks from heaven, and cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink"?

You have not come before—that was wrong—but the times of your ignorance God winked at, and bids you come *now*. Oh, that His sweet Spirit would accompany my words, so that you might feel your hearts melting towards the Savior, and might say, "Yes, we will come, we will trust Jesus, we will receive His grace!"

O my brother, if this be your hearty consent to infinite love, then your sorrow is ended, your danger is over, your joy is begun. The Lord grant it, for His dear Son's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 7

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 492, 500

NOTE FROM MR. SPURGEON

LEAVING home in great weakness, I beg the loving sympathy of my friends towards my orphan family of five hundred children. Generous donations at this season would be greatly valued by me. Direct them to C. H. SPURGEON, Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.