

A WORLD-WIDE WELCOME NO. 3352

A SERMON
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*“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28*

PERHAPS no verse in the whole of Scripture has been handled in the pulpit more frequently than this, and yet it has not been exhausted and never can it be. It is a great soul-saving text. There are some words of Scripture which seem to be like special stars in the sky. As the polestar is conspicuous to the astronomer, so are these salvation truths to the evangelist—he is never weary of gazing at them and pointing to them. The promises that are fitted to give present and immediate relief to the conscience are stars of the first magnitude, and many sinners have had their attention attracted by them, and by them been directed to the port of peace.

Upon such a passage as I have propounded for our sermon tonight, I shall have nothing new to say. No novelty is required. We only need to hear the same old truths—ay, to hear them till they work their way into our souls, and then to hear them yet again, that our pure minds may be stirred up by way of remembrance, and that we, feeling their value, may proclaim them out for the guidance and comfort of others.

Observe first—

I. TO WHOM THE SAVIOR ADDRESSED HIMSELF—all them that “labor and are heavy laden.”

It is not once out of a dozen times that I have ever had the good fortune to hear this text quoted correctly. It is, “All ye that are weary and heavy laden,” according to the modern rendering, but as Jesus Christ said it, it is, “All ye that labor and are heavy laden.” I suppose the alteration has been made in the interests of those who will not venture upon an invitation to men to come to Christ until they have got Him—I mean will not tell men to look to Jesus till they virtually have already experienced all that a look to Jesus is ever likely to give them. They will insist so much upon the spirituality of the terms used here that, seeing the words are a little difficult to get over, they must needs change them altogether.

When our Lord said, “All ye that labor,” who is to tell me that I am to trace in the word all them that spiritually labor? I should be afraid to add to the words of Scripture and must leave the responsibility with those who do so. Men labor, and if they labor with their heads, or their brains, or their hearts, in any form of labor, Christ bids them come to Him for rest. Men bear great burdens, some of them burdens of care, some burdens of grief, some burdens of foolish hope, but if they come to Him, being heavy laden or heavily loaded, He will take their load from them and give them rest.

From the day of the fall, man has been a laborer and he has been heavily laden. Into whatever condition man may climb, he cannot altogether escape that first curse, “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.” If he do not work with his hands, he must at least toil mentally. And if he be idle because he says he has a competency, there is a toilsomeness about such a life as that from which a man cannot escape.

Instead of the world getting better in the way of toil and burden carrying, it is every day getting worse. Why, our forefathers of the Puritan times were quite easy souls compared with us. When I read the diaries of some of their lives, I quite envy them. A Puritan minister, when he addicted himself to the work of the ministry with all his heart, was not run upon by the public, and hunted up by the postman, and embarrassed with ten thousand of the difficulties which arise out of our unnatural civilization. Good souls, they had rest sometimes, and walked with God with some degree of ease.

But now the world goes by steam. We have laid down steel rails and all business must run thereon. It is all driving and turmoil from morning till night. You wake up, some of you, with the sound of the steam whistle in your ears, and you scarcely can sleep in your beds because of the rumbling of the trains at your very doors. It is a world of toil, and I believe that it will go on so—and instead of getting better, the world will in some respects get worse. It will be a harder struggle to live and a sterner struggle to live a spiritual life as the world grows grey.

Hence, the words of the Master seem to me to come more fresh tonight than even when they fell from His lips, “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,” for we labor more now than men did in His day, and are even more heavily laden than they were then. Jesus Christ addresses you tonight whose toils are many and your burdens heavy.

Some of you are laboring after wealth, and if you got it you would find no rest in it. But the probabilities are that you may never get it and so be disappointed. But you want rest. Well, come to Him and you shall have it. Some of you, perhaps, are toiling after learning and the honor which it will bring you—may you get it! If it is good for you, you may, perhaps, obtain it. But in all learning there is sorrow—oftentimes the greater the domain of knowledge, the broader expanse is there in the soul for the floods of grief to cover.

But if your mind needs rest, Jesus bids you come to Him. Oh! you with enlarged ambitions, with grasping desires. Oh, you that are panting and puffing in the race of life, you that are faint and weary with tugging at the oar of the world’s great ship, come to Him, for He can release you. He can take off the chain from the galley slave and set you free.

Still, while the text is not exclusively directed to those who spiritually labor and are spiritually heavy laden, it includes them. Do I not address some tonight who are laboring hard to establish a righteousness of their own? Oh! sinful attempt, since God has forbidden it and declares the effort to be futile. Oh! vain folly, thus to fly in the face of eternal wisdom which declares that “by the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified”!

If you are ever to get rest, you must cease from your own doings and you must come to Christ. Oh! you that are heavily laden with your sins and feel them like a burden pressing your heart, bowing you to the ground and crushing you, as it were, down to the lowest hell—that burden can never be lifted from off your weary backs except by one hand, and that hand the pierced hand which has felt the weight of the burden before. To you that toil, to you that are bowed down and crushed with the load, Jesus speaks tonight as He did of old, and He says, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”

Now notice—

II. THE COMMAND OR THE INVITATION—which you will—THAT JESUS GIVES.

It is, “Come unto *me*.” There never seems to have been any difficulty in Christ’s day in understanding the expression, “Come unto me.” It exactly struck the Oriental mind—they understood it at once. But now-a-days thousands ask the question, “What is faith? What is believing in Jesus? What is coming to Him?” Many convinced souls say, “If I could walk to Christ, it does not matter how perilous or fatiguing the journey, I would certainly go. And if He were here literally, and I could fall down and kiss His feet, I would certainly do it.”

Understand, then, that the coming here mentioned is not to be taken literally, but spiritually. It is not a physical coming. We cannot come to Christ by the motion of our bodies now, nor shall we be able until He calls us by the sound of the last trumpet. If men had come to Christ physically when He was on earth, it would not have been of any use to them, unless by faith they had spiritual contact with Him, for some drew near to Him with idle curiosity and others with malignant opposition—yea, there were those who came to Him to crucify Him. They looked to Him physically as He hung upon the tree, but they were not saved by such a coming as that.

The coming here meant is coming by the mind, approaching with the heart—a thing of the inner nature, a spiritual thing. To come to Christ, then, is just this—in one word, it is to accept Him as your Savior—but to spell out that one counsel, let me trace out the action of the mind in coming.

First, you must *listen to His doctrine*. Seek to know, oh, weary ones, what it is that Jesus teaches. Turn to the record and see who He was, and what He was, and what was His commission, and what was His message, and what were the terms in which He delivered it, and what was the spirit in which He came to bring it.

In the next place, *believe whatsoever He teaches*. Accept as being true what Christ declares. If He claims to be God, believe Him—accept Him as such. If He puts Himself down as Prophet, Priest, and King, let your mind jump at it and say, “He shall be my Prophet, my Priest, my King.”

Coming to Christ begins in divers ways in the soul. With many it begins first by hearing of Christ, then by believing with the mind the testimony that is borne concerning Jesus. But this is not enough. After having heard and accepted that the witness of Christ is true, the genuine coming is then to cast your soul, with all its awful interests, into His hands and trust Him—in fact, to say, “I have no dependence for life, for death, for eternity, but on the person and merits of that Son of God who was born of Mary, who lived a life of holiness, who died upon the tree, who rose again, and who ever lives to make intercession for us.”

The simple act of trust—albeit by some it is so much despised—is the act which saves the soul. The moment a sinner casts himself flat upon what Christ has done, with no reserve, no holding to any other hope even with his little finger. The moment he makes himself to be a bankrupt, gives up all, and lives upon the charity of Christ—the moment he takes off his own rags completely, and puts on no garment but the righteousness of Christ—the moment that he acknowledges himself to be a black, filthy, condemned—ay, and without Christ—a condemned sinner—the moment he feels that, and then takes Christ to be his fullness, his trust, his all in all—he has come to Christ, he is saved, he shall have rest.

But to come to Christ implies a little more than even this, if we would get the perfection of it and the completeness of the rest which is promised. When I come to Christ and trust in Him to be my Savior, I am then to continue to come to Him *by following in His footsteps, obeying His precepts, drinking in His spirit, and serving His cause*.

Brethren, we are all, as His people, constantly coming to Him. “To whom coming,” says the apostle, “as unto a living stone”—not, “to whom we have come, and there is an end of it,” but to whom we are always coming. We are like the country people, who do not live by experience of having gone to the well seven years ago, but they go every day and dip the pitcher in afresh.

We are like in our souls what we are in our bodies—we do not grow fat and flourishing on the experience of having eaten a good meal twenty years ago, but it is by daily coming to the table and continually receiving fresh food for the sustenance of our bodies. And brethren, to get perfect peace through Jesus Christ, there must be a daily, an *hourly* coming to Him in constant trust, in faithful obedience, and in holy fellowship, striving to be conformed to His image. “Come unto me,” then, says the Savior, “all ye that labor and are heavy laden.”

He picks out you working men and He says, “Come and hear what I have got to say. Believe it, accept it, trust it, and I will give you rest.” He finds out you merchants, who toil so much that the brain sometimes gives way, and He says, “Now, come, come to Me and I will give you rest. You expect to get it when you retire from business and go to your country house—but even now, if you come to Me, you shall have a rest that no suburban retreat, no accumulation of wealth, no immunity from the strain of business can ever give you. I can make that heart beat at an easier rate. I can cool that hot blood that is now coursing through your veins at such a speed. I can bathe your spirit in a sleep that shall be like an infant’s slumber, soft and light—and I can do this for you while you are striving to be rich, or while you are poor, while your losses are great, while your friends are falling like autumn leaves, and whilst your fears are howling in your ears like winter’s winds. I can give you rest, perfect rest, if you come to Me.”

If you come to Him, believe what He says, trust Him entirely, rest and repose in Him, and you shall get for your souls that paradise which they so much need, of perfect peace.

Having noticed the persons addressed and the invitation given, let us observe—

III. OUR LORD'S DESCRIPTION OF THE BLESSING WHICH IS TO BE GIVEN TO SUCH WHEN THEY COME. "I will give you *rest*."

The best word in all human language, next to "God" and "Jesus" is that word "rest." Different views of heaven charm different people. No doubt heaven is described under various metaphors so that every Christian may find some delight appropriate to himself. As for me, whether it is that I am constitutionally lazy or not, I do not know—there is no idea of heaven which charms me like that of being at perfect rest in Christ Jesus, where:

*"Not a wave of trouble rolls
Across the peaceful breast."*

This text seems to ring like a marriage bell in one's ears. "Come unto me, and I will give you *rest*."

Oh, you will not care about it, you who do not labor, you who are never heavy laden, and have got no more burden than you can carry—you will not care about it—but those who are stuck in the life-struggle, or that are oppressed with spiritual grief—they will be the persons who will find the sweetness of it. Ay, rest for the weary, rest for the toiler, rest for the heavy laden—this is a blessing indeed!

And what is the rest which Jesus gives? Well, it is a spiritual rest which He bestows upon His people—a rest which rests them throughout, for when the mind gets rested, the very bodily frame seems to be sustained, while an agitated mind often brings the body into disease and lowers it into its grave. Jesus can give such a tonic to the entire system by the peace which He imparts, that the very lame shall be made to leap like a hart.

Oh, what a peace this is! the peace which Jesus gives. *He gives peace as to all the guilty memories of the past.* These will haunt us. When the conscience is aroused, our dead sins seem to start up, wearing, each one its grave clothes, and each sin stands before us like a grim ghost claiming retribution. And the awakened conscience, knowing right well that the wages of sin is death, becomes alarmed and the man says, "What must I do to be saved?"

As if in your walk tonight there should suddenly open before you a pit in the very pathway which you were about to tread—how you would stand amazed and aghast! And then if another opened behind you, and then on either hand the earth began to rock and reel, how would you be astounded and dismayed!

Such is the position of a man when conscience is suddenly quickened. He thought himself to be standing on the solid ground of his own good works, but suddenly all is gone. No good works appear. Sin is on either side. Hell is beneath him and the sword of divine justice, all unsheathed, is gleaming above his head.

Ah! but Jesus Christ can show you how sin is forgiven. If you believe Him, He will tell you that He came into the world to suffer for the sins of all who trust Him—that He actually did bear all the punishment which was due from the hand of God to all the sinners who will trust in Him—and that God is so rigidly just, severely righteous, yet infinitely gracious in the pardon of those who will trust in Christ.

Nor is it only the fear of the past, but *the power of the present*, from which this kindly rest exempts us. A man awakened longs to escape from sin. As an iron net, his habits of sin surround him. He tugs and toils to escape therefrom, but the more he strives, the more thoroughly is he enveloped therein. His attempts at reformation from some sin are often successful, but any attempts to reform our nature and to overcome our inbred sin, made by us in our own strength, must inevitably be a failure. Sin, indeed, will only become more exceedingly sinful the more we strive to bridle it unless we cry unto the Strong for strength.

How often has a man said, "I cannot lead a better life. It is no use—you may exhort me if you please, but see what I have been, and how I am tempted, and how my passions drag me this way and that? There is no hope for me!" But Jesus steps in and says, "Come to Me and I will give you rest. I can change your

nature. I can take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I can give you tendencies and passions of quite another kind which shall combat with your old proclivities and ultimately overcome them. I can inspire in you a new hope. I can breathe into you a new and better life, for I am the Resurrection and the Life, and he that believes in Me, though he were dead, as you are, yet shall he live. And as to returning to your old sins, that shall not be, for he that lives and believes in Me shall never die. I will keep you, and deliver you from the power of sin and Satan, and you shall be Mine even till life's end." Thus peace is given to us, both as to the guilt and as to the power of sin.

But this is not all. Jesus can give peace and does give peace to all who come to Him as to *the cares of this world*. The righteous have their troubles. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." But there is a sacred art which Jesus teaches, which enables the Christian to rejoice in tribulation and to triumph in the midst of distress.

Some of the happiest moments that God's people have ever had have been when neither sun nor moon appeared, and when in the darkness they crept into the bosom of Jesus and nestled there. We are not dependent upon outward circumstances when faith is in exercise. Jesus shows us that His love is faithful, eternal, immutable love, and straightway we kiss the smiting hand and love it as well as the giving hand.

Oh! you that are now the poor slaves of your daily cares, how happy would you be if you came to Jesus and trusted in Him! The cage would grow no larger. The income might become no richer. You might still be among the poor and the laboring ones, but you would have a rest in your condition, a satisfaction in your state which would make it better, though it changed it not.

For it is all one to a man to have his estate brought up to his mind or to have his mind brought down to his estate. It matters not, as long as he is content. It all comes to the same end, and Christ, by a divine baptism of His love, bathing us, covering us completely in the floods of His divine grace, can give us, as to the cares of this world, a perfect rest.

And my brethren, if we come to Christ, we shall get rest *as to our desires likewise*. Thoughtful men find it difficult to rest. They go from one theory to another. When they think they have nestled for a while, a new difficulty comes and scares them from it. But he that believes in the Son of God has something upon which his mind may stand most stably, for as well is the teaching of Christ the most reasonable as it is also the most spiritual of doctrines. He that gets to know Christ, gets a fixed leverage for his soul, on which to stand fast—let the world whirl as it may.

He that gets Christ gets rest for his *affections as well as for his understanding*. The affections want something to love. We are always idolizing something or other, but those things either get broken in pieces, or else turn out to be our enemies. But he that gets the love of Jesus Christ supremely rests in his heart and he can sing:

***"Now rest, my long-divided heart;
Fixed on this blissful center, rest."***

As I have already shown you, the conscience rests, so the understanding rests, the judgment rests, the affections rest, and the whole powers of the man come to rest, even his desires—those insatiable things—those horse-leeches—those greedy, all-devouring things—these, too, are full when the man gets Christ, for he can then say:

***"All my capacious powers can wish,
In Thee most richly meet:
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet."***

Yes, it is a perfect rest to every faculty of our nature that Jesus Christ gives us when we come to Him.

And what, after all, is that portion of the rest which we see and experience here when *compared with the fullness of which we shall enjoy hereafter*? "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,

and I will give you rest. When the world passes away and all the fashion thereof, when the pulse grows faint and few, when the eyes are glazing, when the eternal world begins to dawn upon the disembodied spirit, I will give you rest—rest when the elements dissolve with fervent heat, rest when the trumpet waxes exceeding loud and long, and the dead arise from their graves, rest when the great white throne is set and the books are opened, when the dividing voice separates the sheep from the goats. I will give you rest when hell opens and the guilty descend to their doom. Rest while their smoke goes up forever and ever, and the vengeance of Almighty God is seen in the overthrow of all His enemies. I will give you rest—rest in the Father’s bosom—rest at the right hand of God, rest in eternal union with Jesus, rest with the palm branch and the harp—rest in the everlasting vision of the blessed Son of God, who is your trust and your all.”

Ah! brethren, what a rest is that:

*“To which our laboring soul aspires,
With ardent pangs and strong desires!”*

It will be a rest from all sin. A rest from all temptation to sin. A rest from all painful memories about sin. A rest from all watchfulness against sin, from all liabilities of ever being led into it. A rest from secret sins, a rest from inbred sins, a total rest from every form of evil. It will be a rest from all the molestations of doubt and fear. A rest from every questioning as to our state before God. A rest from all the uprisings of natural depravity, from an evil heart of unbelief. A rest from the attacks of Satan, the assaults of men without and of fiends from beneath—a rest, too, from daily toils—no more those hands to be rough with labor and that brow to be wet with sweat—no more the head to ache with thought and the heart to throb with dismay.

A perfect rest from every species of toil that can bring distress, though we shall serve Him day and night in His temple. It will be a rest from all care—no thoughts of those children and their little waywardnesses, no thoughts about the house and how to provide things honest in the sight of all men. A rest altogether from the engagements of the city and from the labors of the field.

A rest completely from the toils which are allotted to the sons of men in this vale of tears. Oh! blessed rest! A rest from pain. A rest from death. A rest from fear. A rest with God. A rest, an eternal rest, which remains for the people of God!

And this is for you, laboring and heavy laden one. This is for you, son of poverty. For you, daughter of sorrow. This is for the inmate of the poorhouse, the dweller in the alms room. This is for the crossing sweeper, this is for the toiling artisan. This is for the burdened merchant. This is for the care-worn statesman. This is for the minister who serves his Master till he is weary in his work. This is for us all if we have, by the Holy Spirit, through divine grace, been led to come to Jesus.

There is the point. Do you believe on the Son of God? Dear hearer, do you believe Jesus to have been God’s Son, and to have died as the substitute for sinners? And will you trust in Him as such, wholly and only? Will you venture on Him and venture on Him now? If so, there is His promise, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” If you believe Him, you shall have salvation now. Obey Him. Be baptized as He commands you, and you shall thus have the blessing which God gives to all who trust in the slain Lamb of God.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 6:1-41

Verses 1-5. *After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.*

And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him,

They had been hearing Him all day and He had withdrawn a little from them, but they pursued Him up the hill—and I doubt not that as they toiled up the hill, they showed their faintness and their weariness, which led the Savior to see how much they needed refreshment.

5-7. *He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.*

Men's calculations concerning divine things generally terminate in a deficit. Two hundred pennyworth is not sufficient. But Christ's calculations always terminate in a credit balance over, as we shall see. "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing may be lost." We, at our best, fall short of the mark. Our blessed Master not only does enough, but in His house there is bread enough and to spare.

8-10. *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves: and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down.*

Or lie down, as it is, for they were accustomed to do that at feasts, and Christ would have them take their ease as well as enjoy their refreshment. "Make the men recline."

10. *Now there was much grass in the place.*

So it was a splendid dining room. It was luxuriously carpeted. We learn from this that it was the Eastern spring time, for there is not much grass else. And there was therefore in Christ's banqueting hall the ceiling was of blue and the floor of green grass. What more could they want, except the meat?

10-11. *So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves:*

Common, coarse loaves of barley, not much esteemed even then as food.

11. *And when he had given thanks,*

Though out of doors and "in the rough," as we say, He did not forget that. I know some that fall to, to their meals, like so many swine and have not as much grace as chickens, that are sure to lift their heads whenever they take a drink, as if to bless God for every drop they receive. This gracious habit is going out of fashion among them.

11. *He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down;*

Or reclining.

11. *And likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*

That is one of the rules of Christ's feasting always—as much as they would. According to your appetite, according to your will, according to your faith, so be it unto you.

12. *When they were filled,*

—Had all they could desire.

12. *He said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*

Economy in the midst of bounty. However much we have, we are never warranted in wasting a single crumb. They had as much as they would, but they were not allowed to throw away the fragments.

13-14. *Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

Men are often convinced by the argument of selfishness. They had been fed and now they believed. But faith that depends upon a full stomach will despair when they get hungry again. Always beware of that religion which is in dependence upon loaves and fishes. You know how it was with the children of Israel.

*“Now they believed the word,
While rocks with rivers flow,
Then with their sins they grieved the Lord,
And He did bring them low.”*

Oh, but we must not have a faith that depends upon what it can see, and upon what it can eat, and what it can drink. Oh, for the confidence in the blessed person of the Lord, and in the spiritual riches which He can communicate.

15. *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*

What? Could He not have used His kingship for the best of purposes? Might He not easily have routed the Romans, restored Israel to all her glory, conquered the Gentiles, and subdued the world, and set up a glorious church and state, with Himself for the King and Himself at the head of the church? Ah, that has been the idol of a great many and like a will-o'-the-wisp, it has led many of the true people of God into bogs and sloughs, where they were likely to be lost.

But our Master knew better than this and was not to be tempted away from the true method by which His church is to be set up in the world. Therefore, "He departed again into a mountain himself alone."

16-17. *And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.*

That is a sentence that I should think some very gloomy people might hang upon and about which they might groan in unison, "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them." Have you never been in that condition? Dark, dark, dark, as to circumstances, and as to feelings, and Jesus was not come to them. Now, something comes beside that.

18. *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.*

Misfortunes never come alone. An absent Savior, a roaring sea, and a bellowing wind. What will they do now?

19. *So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus*

Here He is. Here is the first of their blessings. The first mischief is removed and the rest will soon go. They see Jesus.

19. *Walking on the sea,*

Oh, what a sight! A grander sight than to see Him on the land. And it is a more glorious sight to see Christ in the time of trouble than it is in the time of prosperity. He is always sweet, but He is more marvelous when they see Jesus walking on the sea.

19. *And drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.*

Afraid of their best friend—trembling at their deliverer.

21. *Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

The sea and the winds knew how not only to spare the vessel, but to carry it instantaneously to the place where they wished to be. But how often have you and I been rowing about, five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, and we did not seem to be getting out of the storm at all? But the moment Christ has come, we have been where we wished to be. Oh, glory be to His name—there is no difficulty that you can be in, dear friends, but Christ can get you out of it in a moment and bring you where you should be.

22-24. *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one where into his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.*

Was not that a pleasant sight? So it seemed, but it was not. "Seeking for Jesus." That is a good description of a man—seeking for Jesus. Ay, but they were only seeking for more bread. They looked at Him as a bread giver—and they were after Him for that.

25. *And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?*

They could not understand how He could have got there. Jesus answered them and did not answer them. Some of Christ's answers are evidently no answers at all. That is very often the best answer you can give.

26. *Jesus answered them and said,*

What, did He explain to them how He got there? No, He would not gratify their curiosity. He came not for that end. He therefore gave them a home stroke and said:

26. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*

You are loafers—loaf-hunters. You seek not Me, but Mine. It is not for the good that I can give your souls, but it is that you may have another meal, that you are here. Yours is cupboard love. You come after what you can get.

27. *Labour not for the meat which perished, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*

Now, you quite understand what Jesus meant? Seek after that which will feed your souls. Do not hunt so much after bread for the body. Yet the Savior puts it very curiously. This is a double-shotted perplexity, a singular, curious kind of word. You are not to labor for that which you cannot get without labor and you are to labor for that which you cannot get by labor. The Savior liked to put things in that sententious way, so that they might remember what He said. If they misunderstood Him, it was their own fault, for it is plain enough.

God grant us grace to practice the meaning of these words. Why are you so eager to get a bit of barley bread and a fish? Oh, that you were half as eager to come and get the bread which comes from heaven which will make a man live forever and which will be food to him as long as he lives.

28-29. *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God,*

—The chief work, the greatest work which you can do.

29. *That ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

This is the point. You would like Me to work miracles. You would be glad to have a very wonderful, mysterious experience, but this is the thing you ought to seek after—the grandest, greatest thing that you can have—"that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

30. *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou, then, that we may see, and believe thee? what doest thou work?*

Are you not wonderfully struck with the patience of Jesus? These people had seen His miracles, and they had eaten loaves and fishes, and yet they say to Him, "What sign shewest thou, then, that we may see and believe thy work?" Oh, the matchless patience of the Lord and the marvelous provocations of men.

31. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat,* Plainly hinted that they wanted more food.

32-34. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*

Not understanding Him, and praying still for bread, but not for grace.

35-37. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

What a striking truth that was, with which to reply to them. You only come after Me for bread, but you do not come after spiritual things. You do not believe in Me. But even if you do not, I shall not be disappointed, and My work will not fail. God has an election of grace and that election shall be carried

out. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” And then, as if to cheer them up again, He says, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

38-41. *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.*

And there you see Christ has got no farther with them, but to leave them murmuring. And I believe that often the true minister of God must expect to see no other result come of faithful testimony than for the people to murmur at him. But what if it is so? Will his Master blame him? No. No more than He blamed the Only Begotten.

It must be so that there may be a separation between the precious and the vile—that God's chosen may be drawn out. While such as believe not, shall be judged, and in their own consciences, shall be condemned.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. 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.