

TWO LOVING INVITATIONS

NO. 633

A SERMON PREACHED
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

“Come and see.”
John 1:39.

“Come and dine.”
John 21:12.

THE one text is in the beginning, and the other at the end of John’s gospel. There is a mystery here. Here is typified a growth, which it were well for us to understand. “Come and see,” is for babes in grace—“Come and dine,” is for strong men and women in Christ Jesus. We must notice the order. “Come and see,” is the beginning of spiritual life, as it is the beginning of this gospel. “Come and dine,” is a high later-privilege of the spiritual life, and a blessed result of it. “Come and see,” is the gospel’s cry to those outside its pale. It has nothing to conceal. It wears no mask. It has no Most Holy Place into which entrance is forbidden. It has a *“sanctum sanctorum,”* but the way into it is open. Open and above-board in all its doings, the truth as it is in Jesus bares its bosom secrets, and cries to every passerby, “Come and see.” The seals of the book are broken, the darkness is rolled away, the vision is open, and with clarion note, the invitation is issued, “Come and see.” Romanism may conceal its worship under the Latin tongue; difficult phraseology, and polished periods may hide from the multitude the teaching of professed Protestants, but the true preacher of Christ declares, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” The shutters of every window are open, the key is put into every lock, and every door is thrown wide open. Investigation is courted upon every point—the gospel stands at her door and says, “Come in here, come and see.”

You have this short sentence, “Come and see,” as, first of all, *an encouragement to inquirers*. Many of you are like John’s disciples; they had heard John preach, and they believed his word, and when they saw Christ, to whom John pointed, they followed Him, but not *knowing* Him, they followed Him with a question upon the tip of their tongues—“Master, where do You dwell?” He said, “Come and see.” You also are anxious to know Christ; you have heard His Word preached by some of His witnesses, and you want to know Him personally for yourselves. You have a pressing question to put tonight, and Jesus encourages you to ask, no, to come, and get your own answer with your own eyes. “Come,” He says, “Come and see.”

There are three ways, I think, by which persons are to, “Come and see.” One is by *observation*. We ought to give attention to the teaching of the gospel, to weigh it and prove it. If it is found false, we are to cast it away with decision. But if it is found worthy of our attention, we are to hold it fast, and never let it go. Many persons are careless. They will consider the last new novel, or they have been clamoring to get the *“Life of Julius Caesar,”* to see what the Emperor of the French can have to say upon that subject; but concerning Christ crucified, they have no curiosity. They frequent their place of worship without feeling enough interest in the affair to ask themselves why they go. They do not expect to understand what they hear, or if they understand it, they care not whether the thing is true or not; it is nothing to them that Jesus should die. Now, surely a theme which involves eternal consequences, a matter which deals with my immortal spirit, ought not to be put into the background, and left to careless inadvertence. I ought, at least, to give it something like the consideration which it claims at my hands. But some look at it through colored spectacles. They are prejudiced against the gospel; they observe it, they say, but their observation is tintured by themselves, and by their own character. Some persons make up their minds as to what the gospel ought to be before they try to find out what it is; they do not come to the Bible, nor to the hearing of the Word in order to discover what the truth of God is, but they sit down, and dream, and fashion in their own minds just such a sort of concoction as they imagine gospel truth should be, and everything which is contrary to this, they will kick against, like the foolish ox which kicks

against the goad. It would be no use for me, in astronomy, to make a hypothesis, and then go out with a telescope and say, "That star ought not to be where it is. According to my theory, Jupiter ought not to have moved as he has moved, and therefore, I do not believe in Jupiter, nor in the stars, for I do not like their goings on." Who but madmen talk thus? I must always shape my views to facts, and regarding the Bible as the great storehouse of facts, I must take care that I go to it with a candid and unbiased judgment. May God help me to do so. To find out what the truth of God is, "Come and see," but ask God to open your eyes that you may behold the wondrous things which are written in His law.

Does anyone inquire how he can come and see in the matter of observation? We invite you, dear friends, to a *diligent reading* of Scripture as one means of seeing. The worst-read book in England is the Bible. People read a verse of it or half a chapter in the morning, and think they understand it. Suppose anyone were to read a poet in that way. Let the world's favored poet, Shakespeare, be treated in such a style as that, and what man could ever appreciate his beauties? If you get a poet, say Cowper, you read "*The Task*" through. You do not think of snatching a line or two here and there—if you did, you would be like the Greek teacher who carried a brick about as a specimen of a house which he had for sale. If you read Young's "*Night Thoughts*," it is true that almost every line is noteworthy, and is as fine-tuned as a distinct proposition; but still, he who would appreciate the beauties of Young must read the "*Night Thoughts*" through, or, at least, read a book at a time. Yet there are thousands of you who never did read one of the gospels through, never read one of the epistles through with a studious mind, desiring to catch the drift, and to understand the sense. And do you dream you will ever know what the Bible teaches by just recalling a portion here and a portion there? Impossible! Absurd! If you have any care to, "Come and see," read the Bible in a common-sense way, and sit down with the determination that, as far as the human mind can find out what God means, you will know what He has revealed concerning His Son. I am not afraid of what the consequences will be if you do that. If, moreover, you seek the aid of the divine Spirit, your search cannot be in vain. You shall see Jesus and rejoice in His great salvation.

Then next, I earnestly desire you to *hear the gospel* as well as read it, only take care that what you hear *is* the gospel. It is very easy to find divines of flowery speech, and flowing tongue, from whom, in a course of seven years, you would probably learn nothing whatever of the doctrines of the covenant of grace. It has been said that if you were to hear a lecturer on geology or astronomy deliver some 12 or 13 lectures, you would be able to pick up a pretty clear idea of the system of geology or astronomy, which the lecturer meant to teach. But I declare and assert, and will prove it by sermons printed by sundry authors, that you might hear 13,000 sermons of some men without knowing what system of divinity they taught, if, indeed, they have any system of divinity at all! What do you go to God's house for? Is it to have your ears tickled? Do you go to the place of worship that you may admire the eloquence of man? Go to your theater or your senate if this is your desire; such places are the legitimate arena for display—come not to God's house for that. There we should resort to learn to pray, we should come that we may, in the words of our text, "See." See ourselves, and better still, see the Lord Jesus! This should be the first inquiry as we go up the steps into the place of meeting—"Sirs, we would see Jesus," and if Jesus is not to be seen there, no matter how brilliant the display of fireworks with which the sermonizer may indulge you—that is not the proper place in which to spend the precious hours of Sunday! We would see Jesus! We would know what we must do to be saved! *Observe* then, observe carefully, keep your eyes open, not only to the world of nature, but to the Book of God, and the lives of His people, and thus, "Come and see."

Truly, inquirer, there is a better way of coming and seeing, and that is by *believing*. If you can at once believe God's Word, you shall see far better than if you are merely a seeker and surely the revelation of God in Christ may well demand your implicit faith. See how true others have found it. If the proposition is, "Can Christ forgive sin?"—hear what others say who can sing of pardon bought with blood, and of promises applied to their souls with power, breathing peace and pardon to their hearts. Do you remember your mother? Do you remember the glitter of her eyes in death's dark hour? Do you remember how she bore her dying testimony, that all that God had said concerning Christ was true? That He was able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him? She was no woman given to deception. If I remember rightly, you can say of her that she was a common-sense, shrewd woman, not easily deceived, and yet in that last article of death—when every sham comes crumbling down, and all that is mere paint and tinsel is broken and dashed away, she found the solidity of her hopes and rejoiced in them. You have other friends. In business, they are not second-rate men; with regard to matters of

common sense, you would trust them as well as any who you know; they are not hot-headed and enthusiastic, likely to be carried away by the multitude, after some hare-brained prophet. And yet steadily and solemnly, they tell you that Christ has given them new hearts, and right spirits, that He has changed their lives, that He has given them a peace and a joy they never knew before. They tell you that they have answers to prayer—that whenever they spread their case before God, their heavenly Father hears them, and sends them speedy relief; they tell you that they find in religion a spring of moral action such as was never found in the mere precepts and teachings of law and conscience. Now, believe these men. If they were the worst men in the neighborhood, if they were the felons and rogues of trade, I would recommend you *not* to believe them—but since they are the best in the world, and rank high in your esteem—at least trust them so far as to come, yourself, to a candid observation of these things, and believe that at least there is some truth in them. I would to God, dear friends, that you would believe these things to be true concerning Christ's ability to save, because you have God's Word for it, and if you ask me how I know it is God's Word, I can take you in vision to Nineveh.

See the excavated cities and palaces, the winged bulls and lions buried in the rubbish—all which tell us that that Book which spoke of them, before they were discovered, must have a high antiquity. And the volume which, written in the times of their glory, yet told of their tremendous fall, must have had an inspiration in it not belonging to common books. The best proof of this inspiration is, perhaps, to be found in this—that we know that God wrote *another* book, the book of nature, and as the two works of one author are quite sure to exhibit some common points in which you may find out the author's idioms, so every student of nature and revelation has been able to say that the two volumes bear marks of the same writer. And the more they have studied both books, the more they have said, "We find the same God in the one as in the other." The God of nature is kind and good, and so is the God of revelation. The God of nature is the terrible God of the avalanche and thunderbolt, the tempest and the whirlwind; and the God of this Book is terrible out of His holy place when He comes to judge the sons of men. We find that the very same official approval which is set upon the book of nature is also stamped upon the Book of God. We would be glad, therefore, if you could believe this, and believing this you would soon, "Come and see," for mark you, the best way of knowing about Christ is to *try Him*, to experience Him, and since you want to know if He can forgive sins, trust Him to forgive yours. You want to know if He can change the human heart—trust Him to change yours. You long to know if there is a peace that passes all understanding which will still the throbs of your guilty heart; try Him and see. You pant to learn if there is a joy which can gild your darkest hours with sunlight, and make the dreary passage through the shades of death to be full of life and hope—try Him and see. We are not afraid to stake all upon the trial. I will cheerfully be bondsman for my Lord and Master. If there can be a soul that sincerely trusts Him, that shall not find even in this life salvation, and in the world to come, eternal joy, then I am content to be deceived, or content to allow the deceiver's doom! Beloved, if we only promised you something to be had in the next world, you could not make the test at once; but that which we hold out to you is *present* salvation. It is not merely some future joy, but present joy! Oh, if you trust Jesus Christ, you shall "Come and see," that sin is mastered as well as pardoned, that the guilty conscience is pacified forever, and that your joy and peace can begin this side of the grave. Inquirer, "Come and see." Oh, pass not by; neglect not the exhibition of divine love and grace; but "Come," oh, "Come and see." May the Holy Spirit bring you, for His name's sake.

Very hurriedly let me notice the next point. I think this invitation may be well addressed to *every beginner in the school of Christ*, as well as to every inquirer. We ought not to be satisfied with merely being saved. As soon as ever we are saved, the moment we believe in Christ—our next business is to learn more of Christ. You need to know the doctrines, dear friends. It is well to be thoroughly established in the faith. "Come and see," search the Scriptures; see what God has revealed, and be established in His divine truths. Every precept, as well as every doctrine, cries to you, "Come and see." Every promise says, "Come and see," do not run short of promises! It is bad when a man is out of money; and the Christian, when he is without a promise in his hand, is somewhat like a person without ready money in his purse. Study the promises. "Come and see." As to experience, too, the Lord says, "Come and see." Do not talk of Tabor's height, as though you could never climb it. From the top of it, there comes a voice, "Come and see." Do not speak of Pisgah, as though your feet might never tread its consecrated summit. The voice says, "Come and see." If there is any point of communion, or height of fellowship as yet unreachd by you, there peals forth from its excellent glory the endearing exhortation, "Come and

see.” No boundry is set about the Mount of God; no fiery wall conceals the secret of the eternal. “The Spirit of the Lord is with them who fear Him; He will show them His covenant,” for all revelation cries with one voice, “Come and see.” I think this is the cry of the gospel to every sinner, “Come and see.” Perhaps it is easier to use the eyes than any other organ except the ears. This I know, it is more *pleasing* to use the eyes than the ears. You can keep a set of children as happy as the birds of the air with a picture book—when they would probably go to sleep if you were to talk to them. The eye has the greatest power of conferring pleasure. Whether it conveys truth to the heart more rapidly than the ear does, I cannot say. At any rate, it does so most pleasingly, and for this reason, among others, Christ bids us to use the eyes. He hangs upon His cross before you, and cries, “Come and see.” And He adds this promise—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.”

What is there to see? God made flesh. He who made the heavens, veiling Himself in Manhood. Is not this something? God came down to you, poor sinner, that He might take you up to Himself. What is there to see? There is the Son of God bleeding for human sin. His griefs are such that no tongue can explain them, and no pen can write them—but they are not for Himself—for in Him is no sin. “Come and see,” for if you see the griefs of Jesus, and take them to be your trust, you shall be saved. “Come and see.” Do you ask what there is to see? This same Jesus rises from the tomb! He could not have risen if He had not been God, or if He had not completed the great work of His people’s redemption. He ascends. The clouds receive Him. Up there in heaven, He stands pleading for sinners, pleading for us, and “He is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” “Come and see.” “Come and see.”

I am often asked, “Sir, how can I get faith?” I believe that faith comes from Christ, and is His gift to sinners. Sit down in your chamber tonight when you get home, you who want to believe, and just think this over—*GOD* made flesh! If you will think of that, I pray the Holy Spirit visit you, and then the thought will strike you—“That is wonderful! Who could have dreamed of it? God suffering instead of man, that the justice of God might be fully satisfied, and the mercy of God might have full scope!” While you are thinking of this wonder, and picturing the wounds, and looking to the blood, and thinking that you almost hear the dropping of the blood upon the Mount of Calvary, I think you will, you scarcely know how, find yourself ready to sing—

*“I do believe—I will believe
That Jesus died for me;
And on the cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free.”*

You cannot make yourself believe. Faith is the gift of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit, but it comes through hearing, and hearing is principally blessed to the working of faith, because it gives you a sight of Christ in meditation, and as some say, “Seeing is believing.” Certainly such a sight as hearing gives is often made the channel by which the soul believes in Christ. “Come and see.” Oh you worldling. Turn your eyes here, and see the Savior die. Maybe the spectacle will cool your hot blood, and drive away your fever of worldliness and care. Oh, you giddy, careless men and women, look here and see your Redeemer bleed. Possibly you may be sobered by the sight. Oh young men and maidens in your early youth, since you may soon feel the arrows of death, look here and make your immortality secure. You gray-headed ones who have lost your vigor, and spent your strength in sin, yet may the Holy Spirit bring you—“Come and see.” Oh, there is mercy yet, “Come and see.” The great sight is not withdrawn—it is no dissolving view that melts away—it is no burning bush from which you are bid to keep off by the words, “Draw not near here.” But here, over the cross, hangs the motto, and from the Mount of Calvary rings the silvery trumpet note, “Come and see. Come and see.”—

*“There is life in a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for you.”*

II. The second text is, “COME AND DINE.” That is better; that is closer, nearer, dearer, more substantial than, “Come and see.” That may be done at a distance, though “Come” seems to invite us to make the distance less. But, “Come and dine”—that implies the same table, the same food—yes, and sometimes it means to sit side by side, and lean our head upon the Savior’s bosom. Here is nearness familiar and domestic—“Come and dine.” Understand that while we are sinners, faith brings us into a justified state by simply looking to Christ, though the soul has had no enjoyment of Him. But after believing, faith then assists us to really enjoy Christ. I know some of you are wishing and expecting to enjoy Christ first, and believe Him afterwards. I would correct your error. You must take God’s mercies in

their order and season; and you will not find, “Come and dine,” in the *first* chapter of John—*there* it is, “Come and *see*.” Believe Jesus first, and you shall feed on Him afterwards. Certain of you seem to me to be content to believe Christ, and to say, “I am safe,” without wishing to know the blessed enjoyment which is to be found in Him. It should not be so. You are not to be content with the first chapter of John, but go on to the last, and be not satisfied so long as there is a “yet” beyond. If you have seen Christ—if you have touched Christ—if you have put your finger into the print of the nails, be not satisfied till you know the meaning of the text, “Except a man eat My flesh, and drink My blood, there is no life in him.” “Come and dine,” then, implies greater enjoyment than, “Come and see.” “Come and see” gives peace, but “Come and dine,” gives ecstasy, rapture—what shall I call it? It gives heaven on earth, for it gives Christ. “Come and dine” must be experimentally understood before you can read the book of Solomon’s Song with profit. “Come and see” can read the evangelists; “Come and see” can read many of the epistles; “Come and see” may wander delightfully through the book of Psalms; “Come and see” may enrich itself with Proverbs. But the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the garden—that is, the book of Canticles [Song of Solomon]—is not to be eaten of except by those who have heard the Master say, “Come and dine.” I would to God that all the Lord’s people were not merely delivered from the chains of sin, and washed in the Savior’s blood, but brought into the banqueting house, where waves the banner of redeeming love!

There is more enjoyment, then, in the one than in the other, and there is also *more nearness*. When I first believed in Christ, I felt a distance between myself and Him, and the only nearness that I could get was to lay my hands upon His head and confess my sins. But I hope some of us, after a few years of believing, know what it is to sit at His feet with Mary, to lean upon His bosom with John—yes, and to say with the spouse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine.” O beloved, there is a nearness to Christ which the worldling can only laugh at if he should hear us talk of it! Read “*Rutherford’s Letters*,” and you get a glimpse of what it is to dine with Christ. Turn to “*Hawker’s Morning and Evening Portions*,” or even, if you will, wander amidst the quaint rhymes, and sweet poetry of dear George Herbert—there you have, “Come and dine” carried out in sweetest prose. Oh, to get so close to Christ that you can sing with a modern hymn writer—

*“So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He!
So dear, so very dear to God,
I cannot dearer be;
The love wherewith He loves His Son
Such is His love to me!”*

This is a high attainment, but rest not satisfied till you have gained it.

Yet, once more, “Come and dine,” gives us a *vision of union* with Jesus, because the only meat that we can eat when we dine with Christ is Himself. We do not provide the supper. When He dined on that occasion with His disciples, Peter dragged a net full of fishes out of the sea; but when they came on shore, they found a fire already kindled, and fish laid on it, so that the fish they ate did not come out of the sea by their net, at any rate. Christ found the fish and lit the fire, and He found the bread, and then said, “Come and dine.” Ah, and the fire that warms our heart when we have fellowship with Him comes from Himself, and the fish that we eat is His own, and the wine that we drink flows from His own heart. Oh, what union is this! It is a depth that reason cannot fathom, that we eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ. Here we stand and look, and look and look, and though the water is clear as crystal, like the sea of glass before the throne of God, yet to the bottom of it angelic sight can never reach. One with Jesus—by eternal union one. What does this mean, believer?—

*“One when He died; one when He rose;
One when He triumphed over His foes!
One when in heaven He took His seat,
And angels sang of hell’s defeat.”*

Can you comprehend it?—

*“This covenant stands secure,
Though earth’s old columns bow,
The strong, the feeble and the weak*

*Are one in Jesus now.
Oh, sacred union, firm and strong,
How great the grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be
One with incarnate Deity!"*

And yet it is so; and he who has listened to the Savior's voice, "Come and dine," knows it to be so, and rejoices!

In this, also, you find an invitation to enjoy *fellowship with the saints*. You are not to eat your morsel alone, but in company. We sit down in heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—at the marriage supper of the Lamb—and no small part of the heavenly bliss is connected with the fellowship which exists among the saints in glory. So also with our present feasting on the fat things full of marrow which Christ spreads before His chosen ones. We enjoy the company as well as the feast, and find our happiness augmented by the society of kindred minds. The supper of the Lord is the table of communion, not only with the Master, but also with all who love Him in sincerity and truth. One of the surest ways of introducing discord into the midst of a church is for the minister to starve the people. Hungry men are sure to be quarrelsome, and on the contrary, to unite a flock in closest bonds of love, let the minister say, "Come and dine"—and then put before them the finest of the wheat, honey out of the rock, and wine upon the lees well refined. If you would have sweetest fellowship with each other, live on Christ, enter into the banqueting house, sit beneath the banner of love, and you will find that sacred commingling of spirit with spirit which will prove that you are one in Christ Jesus. Christians may differ on a variety of points, they may not see eye to eye on this thing, and on that, but they have all one spiritual appetite, and if we cannot all feel alike, we can all feed alike on the Bread of Life sent down from heaven. Get nearer to Christ and eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, and you will find yourself linked more and more in spirit to all who are like yourself, supported by the same heavenly manna. We do not expect to see all Christians agreeing, but we are sure that one of the most likely plans for cultivating a brotherly spirit is to listen to Christ's words, "Come and dine."

We see in these words the *source of strength for every Christian*. To look at Christ is to live, but for strength to serve Him, you must come and dine. When our Lord had raised the daughter of Jairus, He commanded them to give her meat so that she might be strengthened. And so He says to all of us, "Come and dine." We need as much food for the soul as for the body, and unless we eat we shall be fainting by the way. Are there not many Christians who allow themselves to suffer a great deal of unnecessary weakness on account of neglecting this precept of the Master? I hold that we are bound to lift up the feeble knees and drooping hands, and in order to do this we must live by faith on the Son of God, and listen to His voice as He says, "Eat, oh My friends, yes, drink, oh My beloved." If you want to be as Mr. Feeblemind, I can give you the recipe. Take only a small portion of spiritual food morning and night in your closets; neglect family prayer; never attend a prayer meeting; on no account speak about religious matters during the week; go late to the house of God, and fall asleep when you get there; as soon as you leave the place of worship, talk about the weather. Confine yourself to these rules for a few weeks, and you will very soon be reduced low enough to allow Satan to attack you with every chance of giving you a severe and dangerous fall. Doctors tell us that nowadays the classes of disease most prevalent are those which indicate a low condition of the vital forces. And I think that we are suffering in the Church from the same sort of maladies. You never hear of anyone who is too zealous, too rash in venturing himself for Christ! There was a time when the Church had to censure her young converts because they courted persecution and invited martyrdom. Now we need to stir up the Church, and to urge on our people to more self-sacrifice for the cause of Christ. You need never fear that anyone will kill himself with too much work—we must rather lament that there seems so little exuberance of spirit and vital force among Christians. We none of us need to put ourselves on a low diet—on the contrary, we ought to accumulate strength, and urge every power to its full dimension in the Master's service. For this purpose, "Come and dine." All your strength depends upon union with Christ. Away from Him you must wither as a branch severed from the vine. Feeding on Him, you will be like the branch which is drinking up the sap from the parent stem; you will be strong enough to bring forth fruit, and fill your post among the other members of the one great band of Christians.

We can see, moreover, in these words, the foundation of the Christian's *growth and progress* in spiritual things. To *see* Christ is to begin the Christian's life, but to grow in divine grace we must, "Come

and dine.” The early history of the first disciples is by no means satisfactory. They were evidently only babes in spiritual things. How little they seemed to comprehend the Savior’s mission. He liked to say, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?” They misunderstood the nature of His kingdom, and were continually displaying a carnal and selfish spirit. It is evident that the early dawn of spiritual life is all they had then received. They had *seen* Jesus, they loved Him, and followed Him even unto trial and disgrace—but yet they were far from possessing the Spirit of Christ. Now, after they had reached this stage of living on Christ, they became new men. It is no longer mere sight, but an inward appropriation of Christ Jesus by faith, and the consequences are manifest; they are seen developing themselves under the blessed outpouring of the Holy Spirit into workmen who needed not to be ashamed. They endured hardness as good soldiers of the cross. They fought a good fight, and they finished their course with joy. A higher order of life is clearly theirs. They have risen in the scale of spiritual existence. A clearer light shines around them, and they have manifestly grown in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Beloved, we long for your edification, we covet for you the best gifts, and therefore, we say, “Come and dine.”

Many Christians remain stunted and dwarfed in spiritual things so as to present the same appearance year after year. No upspringing of thought and feeling is manifest in them. They exist, but do not grow. The reason is evident—they are not taking of Christ—and they neglect to appropriate to themselves the blessing which He is waiting to bestow. Why should you rest content with being in the tender green blade, when you can go on and reach the ear, and eventually the full corn in the ear? I would that all God’s servants were more in earnest to develop that good thing which has been implanted in them by the Holy Spirit. It is all very well to keep other men’s vineyards, but you must not neglect your own. Why should it ever be winter in our hearts? We must have our seed time, it is true, but oh, for a spring time—yes, a summer season, which shall give promise of an early harvest. Now if you would ripen in grace, you must live near Christ—in His presence—basking in the sunshine of His smiles. You must hold sweet communion with Him; you must leave the distant view of His face and come near, as John did, and pillow your head on His breast. Then you will find yourself advancing in holiness, in love, in faith, in hope—yes, in every godly gift. What a joy it is to see men and women daily living on Christ. You may watch them grow as you have watched the flowers and trees in the gardens expanding under the genial showers and sunshine of the last few weeks. It robs a deathbed of its terrors to see the aged Christian rapidly preparing for glory, but I would rather the man grew before he was about to be taken from us, so that we might be the better for his expanded graces, and enjoy his beauty of holiness a few years here on earth. We do not grudge the saints in glory anything—but it would be a mercy to us if Christians would try and get as much of perfection and maturity as possible a few years sooner—so as to gladden our eyes with some bright blossoms as well as the somber green blades. It is all very well, the fresh greenness in early spring, but I like also the russet hues of autumn, and the rich clusters of the vintage with the songs of the reaper and the shout of “Harvest home!” The golden grain is a goodly and pleasant thing to see, as the field waves in the autumn breeze. So, also, I like to mark maturity in Christ’s fields, as well as in the earthly ones. It is a glorious sight, an experienced saint—a man who has been much with Jesus, and learned of Him—who has caught the Master’s spirit, and reflects it brightly to all around!

As the sun rises first on mountaintops and gilds them with his light, and presents one of the most charming sights to the eyes of the traveler, so is it one of the most delightful contemplations in the world to mark the glow of the Spirit’s light on the head of some saint who has risen up in spiritual stature, like Saul, above his fellows, till, like some mighty Alp, snow-capped, he reflects first of all the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and bears the sheen of His brilliance high aloft for all to see—and seeing it—to glorify His Father which is in heaven! That you may thus grow in grace, listen to the Master’s voice—“Come and dine.”

We notice one more thought, and then must conclude.

Here is *preparation for service*. “Come and dine,” says the Master; but before the feast is concluded, He says to Peter, “Feed My lambs.” And again, “Feed My sheep.” Further adding, “Follow Me.” All the strength supplied by Christ is for service, and for use in His vineyard. When the prophet Elijah found the cake baked on the coals, and the cruse of water placed at his head as he lay under the juniper tree, he had a commission to go 40 days and 40 nights in the strength of it, journeying towards Horeb, the mount of God. So also with us—we eat so as to be able to expend our strength in the Master’s service. We come

to the Passover, and eat of our Paschal Lamb with loins girt, and with our staff in our hand—so as to start off at once when we have satisfied our spirits. Some Christians are for living *on* Christ, but are not so anxious to live *for* Christ. Now, I rejoice to know that I can spend and be spent for the Lord, and I find in labor for Christ that “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” I never feel so like the Master as when I go about trying to do good. Heaven is the place where saints feast most and work most. They sit down at the table of our Lord, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. They eat of heavenly food and render perfect service. Now earth should be a preparation for heaven—come and dine, and then go and labor! Freely you receive—freely give! Gather up all the fragments of your feast, and go and carry it to Lazarus at the gate; yes, carry the loaves and fishes to others, as the disciples did when the Lord had multiplied their little supply—to satisfy the thousands who were famishing for need of food. We have yet to learn more concerning the design of our Lord in giving us His grace. We are not to hold the precious grains of truth like a mummy does the wheat, for ages, without giving it a chance of growing. No, feed yourself, and then go forth and bid others come and eat and drink; go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that there may be many more rejoicing with you in the light and life of Christ. Why does the Lord send down rain upon the thirsty earth, and give sunshine and genial refreshing breezes? Is it not that these may all help the fruits of the earth to yield food for man and beast? Even so, the Lord calls us in to enjoyment and feasting, that we may afterwards go out to labor and service.

My dear hearers, I always seek to see you fruitful in all good works, to do His will who provides all things for us richly to enjoy. You are aware that our Father is glorified if we bring forth much fruit, and so shall we be His disciples. Eat, then; spare not; you are welcome to as much as you can consume, but when you have eaten the fat and drunk of the sweet, go and tell of it to sinners round, that the starving may come and find “wine and milk, without money and without price.” You are to preach the gospel to every creature—proclaim the good news of water from the Rock, Christ Jesus, which flows in the midst of the world’s wilderness, so that all may drink and live. Tell of the finest of the wheat on which you have feasted. Bid the prodigal leave the husks which the swine eat and return to the Father’s house, there to eat of the fatted calf, and feast at the parental board. Tell them there is room in the Savior’s heart, and never cease proclaiming His matchless love and power, and His willingness to say to all, “Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Come and dine.”

I send you away, however, wishing to make the first part of the sermon the more telling to most of you—“Come and see.” You are black with sin, but blackness does not blind the eyes. Your righteousness is nothing better than filthy rags, but the most ragged beggar may look. Our strange old proverb says, “A cat may look at a king,” and the blackest sinner out of hell may look at Christ; and though he has sin well near as devilish as that of Lucifer, yet, looking to Christ, all manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven him! Look, sinner—look! May the Holy Spirit now open those eyes of yours, and turn them to the Savior’s cross, and make you live! May the best of heaven’s blessings be yours tonight and in eternity! Amen and Amen.

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