

WELCOME! WELCOME!**NO. 1624****A SERMON****DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1881****BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

*“And the people, when they knew it, followed him:
and he received them, and spoke unto them of the kingdom of God,
and healed them that had need of healing.”*

Luke 9:11

MY subject has been suggested to me by the rendering of this passage given in the Revised Version, where we read—“But the multitudes perceiving it, followed him; *and he welcomed them.*” The difference lies, you see, between the words, “He received them,” and “He welcomed them.” The new version is an instructive improvement, of which we will at once make evangelical use.

The multitude perceived that Jesus was departing, and began to value His presence all the more, because they feared the loss of it. They could not tell where He might go, nor for how long, and they could not afford to part with Him—therefore no sooner did they see the boat leave with Him, than, watching the direction in which it was steered, they hastened along the shore to overtake Him at His landing.

They were not content to walk, but they ran afoot, and as they darted through the first village, the people inquired the reason of this rush. They were informed that the great Prophet was crossing the sea to the other shore. They joined in the pursuit, and the running company was increased.

When they reached the next town, there was quite a stir, as the citizens heard the crowd tramping through the gate and along the streets. And again the inquiry was heard, “What means this eager, anxious throng?” Again the crowd increased, and on they went, hurrying as hard as they could go, till they actually reached the shore before the vessel which carried Jesus.

As for the Master, though He had taken a ship on purpose to be quiet and alone, He exhibited no signs of anger at their intrusion. He did not rebuke them as though they were rude and troublesome, but we are told that, “He welcomed them.” Had He been like ourselves, He would have regarded them as most unwelcome. But in the graciousness of His heart, He did not think them so, but honestly and heartily welcomed them.

Now, if our Lord welcomed people at that inconvenient time, we might safely infer that He will welcome them at all times. But we are not left to draw inferences. For we find all through His life that He always received sinners, and never rejected any one. Our Lord kept open house as long as He was here. It might always have been said of Him, “This man receiveth and welcometh sinners.”

His motto was, “Whosoever will, let him come.” If any desired to come nearer than being mere hearers, and would join the band of disciples, He was always ready to receive them. If many did not enter into the closest intimacy of His heart, it was because they were themselves unable to come—not because He shut them out.

Publicans and sinners drew near unto Him—the very look of Him was an invitation, His finger beckoned, His eyes persuaded, His outstretched arms entreated—His whole self attracted all men unto Him. At the door of His love there lay no growling dog of morose suspicion. Neither had He placed there the porter of stern rebuke. The door was set wide open, and over the portal were written the words, “COME AND WELCOME.”

That is the subject of this morning's discourse—my earnest desire being that some who have been afraid to approach Him may be induced to come at once by learning how freely He welcomes all comers.

First, we shall dwell upon *the fact* that Jesus welcomes all who come to Him. Secondly, we shall use it as *an encouragement* to all seeking souls. And thirdly, we shall employ it as *a lesson*, teaching those of us who are His disciples how to treat those who desire to see Jesus.

I. First, may the Holy Spirit help us while we dwell upon THE FACT that Jesus welcomed those who sought Him.

We observe, first, that *our Lord received all comers at all times*. The time mentioned in our text was the most inconvenient possible. He was seeking rest for His disciples, who had gone through the various towns and villages preaching and working miracles. They were a good deal elated at their success, and it was needful that they should have a little quiet retirement to think matters over, and to come down into a calm state of mind.

Moreover, they were weary, for they were so thronged by the people that they had not time even for necessary refreshment, and rest was, therefore, absolutely requisite, lest these few men, who were in fact the hope of the church and of the world, should die of exhaustion. The Master put them into a ship that they might sail away, and find retirement in a desert place.

Rest was absolutely needful to the overwrought workers. A great sorrow was on them also, for John had been beheaded, and it was meet that they should solace their grief by a short retirement. At this time, too, our blessed Lord desired obscurity, for Herod was inquiring for Him. And even when that delightful king was in his best mood, he was not one whose near acquaintance anyone would wish to cultivate.

He might, perhaps, have listened to Jesus as he listened to John. But he would have sought His life as soon as he had gratified his curiosity, or another Herodias would have goaded him on to murder the faithful Preacher, who would have made the palace too hot for the wanton. Our Lord's time was not yet come, either to be exhibited in a royal court, or to be slain as a royal victim, and therefore He sought a desert place for a little while.

It was most inconvenient, therefore, to be followed by so great a crowd. Were the workers to have no rest? Could there be no retirement afforded, especially at a time when it was so necessary? Is it not wonderful that under such circumstances our blessed Lord should *welcome* the insatiable throng?

I think, too, that the Master desired just then to hold a conference with His apostles as to the work they had done, and the future which was opening up before them. Peradventure He willed to set apart a season for special prayer with them. Before any great effort, we always read that He retired to pray, and so, depend upon it, after any great enterprise He would again seek private prayer. It would naturally occur to Him to rake in the good seed which the twelve had so successfully scattered.

But peace and rest He must not have, for the multitudes are on the beach before He can set foot thereon. The apostolic conference was broken in upon, and turned into a great camp-meeting. The Master and His disciples are not allowed to get alone even to hold high and solemn discourse upon the affairs of His kingdom.

But here come the crowds, pell-mell, crushing one upon another, and the Master and His little band find themselves the center of a great mass of people. Rest, or quiet, or holy discourse are out of the question—preaching, healing, and feeding must fill up every moment till the day is far spent.

Our Lord welcomed the throng with a gracious air. Full of tenderness, He smiled upon them as a captain smiles upon his soldiers at the muster. He did not lose His patience with them, nor chide them for their ill manners—but just as if He had asked them to come, and had sent forth His heralds to summon them—He stood ready to receive them.

It is wonderful that He did not say, “Go your way for this time—when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” I have heard those words somewhere, but they were not used by our Lord. They were used by one at the door of whose conscience the gracious Lord had been knocking. If there

are any put-offs, they are not on Christ's side, but on ours. Oh sad, that ever men should ask for delay when Jesus, even at the most inconvenient season, is ready to welcome them.

Let me put the truth before some of you here who as yet are unsaved. Come to Jesus when you will—it shall always be at the right time. Times consecrated to other purposes shall yet afford you welcome. The saints of God gather at the communion table, and the spreading of that table is not intended to be a means of grace to the unconverted.

On the contrary, it is fenced and guarded, and reserved for believers only—and none have any right there but those who are in Christ. The object of the Lord's supper is not conversion, but edification. It is intended that as many as are alive unto God should be fed there, that those emblems should remind them of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which are the food of their spiritual life.

Yet if any of you should be looking on—ay, and even if you should have intruded there without a right to come—yet if you seek the Savior, He will not be so occupied with the fellowship of saints as to refuse a sinner. His heart will not be so taken up with the near, and dear, and choice love of His own favored ones as to shut His ear to the cry of the humble and contrite. If you seek Him, even when you are intruding, He will be found of you.

Peradventure, also, I address some who have outlived revivals. You remember precious seasons when the power of God was present to heal men, and many were to your knowledge healed. You sat side by side with some who sought and found salvation in Christ—you did not seek, and you did not find. Or if, perhaps, you exhibited some emotion, yet your search after Christ was very faint and dilatory, and consequently, you did not meet with Him to the joy and peace of your spirit.

Now that the revival is over, and the flood-tide of grace seems to have ebbed out, you have come, like the dying year, to a time when the harvest is past and the summer is ended, and you are not saved. Around you blow the fallen leaves, and you yourself fade as a leaf, but you are not saved. Opportunities of blessing have been plentiful with you, but you are not saved. You are now at the close of the day, and your sun is going down, but you are not saved.

Even yet there is hope, for our Lord's welcome is a long and lasting one. If you are drawn by invisible cords to seek the Savior, yield to those gentle drawings, for Jesus receives men even down to the shutting of the gate. It may be late, but it is not too late. You may go to Christ at midnight as well as at mid-day, and never will He answer that the door is now shut, so that He cannot rise and give you. Even though the special means of grace may have ended, and the men whom God has blessed have gone elsewhere, yet still come, and welcome, to Jesus Christ. For there never was an hour discovered yet in which Jesus would refuse a sinner that longed for Him.

Have you never read that text, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? There is no reserve as to the dead hours of night, or the raw hours of the morning. If a soul will but come to Christ, the Lord will never say him nay.

It may be, dear friend, that you think the present would be a very improper time to come to Christ, because you have so lately been plunging into a fearful sin. You say, "Would you have me go black-handed to Christ, black-hearted to Christ?" Yes, I would have you fly to Him at once, even as the manslayer darted off to the city of refuge, with the blood of the slain still warm upon his hand. Do you put it to me as a question suggested by a sort of moral decency—"Must I not let an interval pass over me in which I may in a measure wash out the recollection of my present sin?"

No! I tell you, no. I rather dread than desire such a false washing as the mere lapse of time can give. Time cannot alter wrong, or make sin less heinous. And if it pacifies the conscience, it is an evil peace, a false peace, a peace to be abhorred. Come to Jesus while yet the wounds of your conscience are bleeding. Come while they are at their worst—neither washed, bound, nor mollified with ointment. When you are foul is the fittest time for washing. And when you are altogether undone, and conscious of it, then is the season to hasten away to the great Savior.

When Saul of Tarsus was about to hunt the saints of God, he saw Damascus lying in the plain below, and he himself was ready like a fierce tiger to spring upon it. But there and then, Jesus appeared to Him.

Might he not have said in answer to the voice from heaven, “My Lord, let me go back to Jerusalem and endure a quarantine. Let me hide away for months, and then come to You”?

No, but then and there he was converted, though smitten down in the act of persecution. Nothing could seem to be more inconvenient than for Christ to receive him there and then, with the writs upon him for the arrest of the saints. Yet the Lord welcomed the persecutor, and He will welcome others in the same case.

My hearer, I will not try to describe your sin of last night, nor will I make a guess at what you propose to do in sin before tomorrow’s sun has risen. But I will beseech you, as you are, to arise and seek the Savior.

Poor prodigal brother, quit the husks and the swine trough—quit them now, and without so much as tarrying to wash your hands, go home to your Father, who will wash you and make you white as snow. Tarry for nothing. Delay is your greatest danger. This very moment is the fittest for repentance and faith. Come now, for the Lord waits to be gracious.

I do not find that when the prodigal reached his father’s house, he came there at an unseemly hour. I never knew whether it was the middle of the night, the early morning, or the middle of the day, for the parable does not give us a hint. At any rate, it was at such an hour that the fatted calf was waiting to be killed, a ring and the best robe were ready to be brought forth, and all in the house were ready to keep holiday over him that was lost and found.

Sinner, hie away, hie away to Jesus, be the hour whatsoever it may. Our gracious Lord cannot repel you, for even those were welcomed who came at the most inconvenient hour which can be imagined—and since then He has refused none.

The same truth will now be set in another light by a second remark. *Our Lord received all sorts of comers.* They were a motley throng, and I fear that few, if any of them, were actuated by any high or exalted motive. No doubt some came to hear, and others came to see, but many came for what they could get. They followed after Jesus because they were sick, and He could heal them.

“Ah me!” I have heard it said by awakened ones, “I am afraid, if I came to Christ, I should come from a selfish motive.” Dismiss that fear—which at bottom is self-righteous. What should a beggar come to your house for but to seek alms? To gain something is the only motive with which a poor sinner can come to Christ. Our fear of hell, or dread of sin, or hope of pardon, must drive or draw us to Christ. In any case, our motive must be to receive at His hands.

I confess that I at first came to Christ only and solely for what I could get out of Him. It was an apostle who said, “We love him because he first loved us.” I have heard of a love of Jesus which is purely unselfish, and I believe it is possible, and that it may grow up in later Christian life. But at the first we must come to Jesus with an eye to what we shall obtain at His hands.

We must come because we cannot do without Him. There is no other way of coming. “It is a low motive,” says one. So it may be, but it is a powerful motive for all that. At any rate, Christ exhorts us to come unto Him for rest and for salvation, and I do not remember a single exhortation to this ideal, unselfish love. The Lord Jesus welcomed the multitudes though they came from low motives, and so will He welcome us if we do but come to Him.

If what we come for is something for ourselves, if we come to Him that sin may be forgiven, and that we may be made the children of God—our motives will not be disgusting to Christ, but He will welcome us.

Among those who came to Christ there must have been all sorts of people, but the bulk of them had hurried to Him hastily and *unprepared*. They came afoot, it is said, running. They had not had time to prepare themselves with any kind of decent apparel. As they ran scampering through the villages, each one gathered others at his heels, and they came helter-skelter, a most promiscuous throng. They were not dressed for solemn worship, but there they were—and the Savior welcomed them.

I wonder how long a man would need to spend in preparing himself for coming to Christ. When he had done it all, what would it be worth? Preparation for coming to Christ is simply this—If you are

empty, you are prepared to be filled. If you are sick, you are prepared to be healed. If you are sinful, you are prepared to be forgiven. But all other preparation is quite out of the question. We must not supersede the Gospel by the law, and we would be doing so if we told the sinner to make himself fit for mercy.

O weary, heavy laden souls, you may come just as you are. Hot from the fleshpots of Egypt. Grimy from Pharaoh's iron furnace you may come, and sit down and eat the Paschal Lamb, and though every rag about you be defiled, yet just as you are, you may come to the fountain filled by Jesus Christ Himself, and wash and be clean.

They were a most unprepared lot of people, but Jesus welcomed them. Most of them might have been objected to by our Lord if He had chosen to do so, for various reasons,—the most of them on account of their *poverty*. They had not even a crust among them. They had come away in such a hurry that they had not brought a day's food with them, and if they came to Christ they must be fed by Him within a few hours, or else drop from sheer starvation.

They were a ragged regiment, a hungry herd—what some fine folks call a mob, the *canaille*—but Jesus welcomed them, and never said a syllable about their bare backs and empty pockets. How squeamish some of His servants are—but their Master had no such proud ways about Him.

I heard one say the other day that he could not attend a place of worship because he had not clothes that were fit to come in. I wonder what sort of garments the Lord Jesus would object to in a coming sinner! I am afraid if He were to see some of you, He would hardly think that you are dressed fit for public worship, for you are too smart by half.

But I do not believe that He ever rejected a man or woman because of their patched or unfashionable garments. What did He care for court dress, and full dress, and all that nonsense? Our Lord was no flatterer of wealthy lords and handsome ladies. No robe or mantle ever charmed His eye.

I never read in Scripture that Jesus said, "Come not between the wind and my nobility, ye unwashed crowds." Never did He turn any away because they were beneath Him in condition, and too poor for His notice. Nothing of the sort. It was the jewel of His ministry that "the poor had the gospel preached unto them." He delighted to see the needy gather about Him to be taught and comforted.

So, then, none of you can plead poverty. If you have not a penny to bless yourselves with, Christ will bless you without money and without price.

Many of the multitude might have been rejected on account of *disease*, for into the crowd the lepers came—disagreeable neighbors anywhere. They certainly had no right to mingle with healthy people, but they did so, for they had hopes of being healed.

Men and women were there who labored under defiling disorders, for which, according to the Jewish law, they ought to have been shut up in a separate house. Yet when the crowd came to Christ, these poor souls came in among the rest, and there is no instance of the Lord's ever sorting them out, and saying to anyone, "I cannot receive you, for you are a leper."

What a melancholy sight the Master must have seen when He went out into the streets, and they laid there the sick in their beds. He always walked in the midst of a great hospital, among the most horrible diseases, yet never once did He turn any case away. O poor souls, sick souls, come to Jesus at once, for my blessed Master will welcome you all, whoever you may be.

Neither did our Lord ever reject one person on account of *youth*. His disciples thought that such a preacher as He was ought never to be listened to except by persons of intellect, or at least of ripe years, who could appreciate what He would say. And when the mothers brought the children, the disciples were much displeased with them. But our Master welcomed the young, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Dear boys and girls, Jesus will not put you by to wait till you are older, but He will welcome you just as you are. Ah, how sweetly Jesus is doing this to my knowledge with many little folks. I heard last week of a poor boy who lived near my house. A meeting is held by some of our friends in a cottage, and this boy came one night, and said, "Please, sir, may I come in?" The good man of the house answered,

“You may if you will wash your face and hands.” “That I will do, sir,” he said, and he soon returned and took his seat.

He was an attentive hearer and a devout worshipper. Though only twelve years old, he loved the prayer meeting, and was always there. One evening he said to the leader of the meeting, “Please, sir, may I pray?” and this poor child then poured out his heart before God with such sweetness that he impressed all who listened to him.

One night as he went out of the room, he shook hands with the good man of the house and said, “Good-bye, sir, perhaps we may not meet again till we meet in heaven.” His words seem prophetic now, for before the next meeting a brewer’s cart passed over him, and his sweet young spirit ascended to Jesus whom he loved so well.

What a joy to know that this poor child is now beholding the face of our Father who is in heaven. I am right glad to say that we are continually receiving boys and girls into the church. Child-piety is no rarity among us. We find it no cause of difficulty, but a well-spring of delight. Dear children, do not be afraid to come because you are so little, for Jesus has told the big people that unless they receive Him as little children they shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. He also said, “They that seek me early shall find me.” Come to Him at once.

There were some in the throng, too, whom Jesus might have rejected because they were *too old*. Here they come! They can scarcely see their way. They limp, they use crutches, they are deaf, and their limbs are very feeble. Surely, when these poor old souls come to Jesus, He might say to them, “What am I to do with you worn-out old creatures? Go and spend the rest of your days where you spent the first part of them! How dare you think of coming to Me when you are bald-headed, feeble, lame, and blind. How can you be soldiers of the cross?”

Glory be to His name, our great Captain enlists old men, makes friends with old women, and delights to magnify the greatness of His grace in the salvation of the most infirm. Father William, though it is the eleventh hour with you, our Lord still calls you into His vineyard. Come, and fear not.

“Well,” you say, “I can understand His receiving both young and old, but surely *sin* must have led Him to refuse a comer.” It was not so. Those who came to Christ were often very sinful, but He received sinners.

Did you ever notice that the last person He spoke to before He died was the thief on the cross—and the first person He spoke to when He rose again was Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils? My Lord delights to draw near to the guiltiest of the guilty, to blot out their iniquities, and to receive them into His heart of love. So, I come back to what I said before—our Lord receives all sorts of comers.

Once more—*our Lord receives all with a hearty welcome*. He did not merely allow the people to come near, tolerating their presence, but “He welcomed them.” When He saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd, His heart was stirred within Him, and He at once laid Himself out to do them good. The sight of their need aroused His compassion—the deep fountains of His infinite love were broken up at once, and flooded His whole nature, so that—“He was moved with compassion.”

He proved that He welcomed them by the deeds that He wrought for them. He taught them concerning the kingdom. He healed those that had need of healing, and He fed the whole five thousand. There was not one single exception to this rule—He welcomed every one of them—taught, healed, fed, and smiled on all.

He did not single out one, and say, “You, sir, may go your way, I will have nothing to do with you.” But each one felt that he was welcome. It is just so now. My blessed Master is glad to receive sinners. His heart yearns over men. He longs for their salvation. He rejoices when they come to Him. He proves His willingness to receive them by the bounty of His grace towards them.

He multiplies His benedictions towards those that trust Him. He heaps on His favors. He does all that they want, and grants them exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or even think—and this

without a single exception on any ground, or for any reason whatever. For “Him that comes to me,” says He, “I will in no wise cast out.” This is the blessed fact.

II. Now I come to use this as AN ENCOURAGEMENT.

If Jesus Christ when He was here on earth welcomed all that came at all hours, then He will welcome you, my friend, if you come to Him now, for the circumstances are the same. You are *the same sort of person* as those whom Jesus used to welcome. They were good-for-nothing bodies. They were persons that were full of need, and could not possibly bring a price with which to purchase His favor.

Are you not just like them? Are you a very special sinner? I am sure I could find another special sinner like you whom Jesus has received. I will not go into detail, but I will venture to ask you—Are you a thief?

*“The dying thief rejoiced to see
In Christ salvation full and free.”*

Have you been unchaste? David was an adulterer and was pardoned. And Jesus forgave a woman that was a sinner, who therefore loved Him much. The untruthful, the unclean, the ungodly are the sort of people that Jesus came to seek and save.

And then there is *the same Savior*. Jesus Christ is the same gracious Pardoner as He was in the days of His flesh. “Why,” say you, “He is in heaven.” Yes, but I never knew anybody lose anything by going to heaven. It is all the other way. Jesus has not lost His tenderness, nor His compassion, nor His delight in blessing the sons of men. He is the same Savior in glory that He was in His humiliation.

I invite you to come, dear friend, though you are suffering from the same unfitness as these people were. Come just as you are, and come with the same expectation as they did—for they expected Him to work wonders for them, and He did so.

Jesus is in the same mind as when He would not condemn the guilty woman, and when He prayed for His murderers. He is still bent upon the one errand of saving men—He still welcomes sinners. Since, then, you are under the same conditions, come, and *expect the same result* from your coming. The welcome that you will receive from Christ, my dear friend, will be as hearty as that which they received.

When is it that a man does not make all comers welcome? It may be a person calls for whom he has no liking, and he does not invite him to a meal because he does not want him. He would sooner have his room than his company. But that is not true of our Lord, for He loves His enemies, and seeks His foes. He has abundant love to guilty men, and hears their cry for mercy. So glad is our Lord to see the marriage feast of His love furnished with guests that He sends out His servants to fetch in highwaymen and vagrants.

Sometimes people are not welcome because they come when you have not enough to feed them. The good housewife murmurs, “I wish they had come some other day.” It is never so with our Master. He has abundant provision, yet there is room, ay, and yet there is food. There is enough in Christ Jesus for all that ever will come to Him for salvation.

All that the Father gives Him shall come, and there is not one that shall come whom He will send away because there is not due provision made for him. That reason cannot possibly exist when Jesus Himself in all His fullness is the covenant provision.

Sometimes a host may not welcome an applicant because it would be dangerous to his reputation to entertain him. We should none of us be eager to entertain a thief or a burglar or a murderer hiding from justice—nor would vagabonds and tramps be our chosen guests—for it would lower our esteem among men.

As for our Lord Jesus, His reputation is gone long ago—“He made himself of no reputation”—that He might welcome the disreputable to His house and heart. They sneeringly spread it about the streets, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” Yes, His reputation was gone among the Pharisees,

but He has a new reputation now, and His great glory is that He cleanses the chief of sinners, and makes them heirs of God. O my trembling hearer, you need not be afraid.

Sometimes a man who has been hospitable has been known to grow weary of it, for he says, “These people come and eat and drink, and then abuse me.” Jesus has never been hardened by this. His house is open, and His table is still furnished. He foreknew our ill manners, and He has not been surprised by the conduct of any of His guests.

He knew they were unworthy. He did not entertain one of them because they deserved it—He did it all because He is infinitely gracious, and delights to do good to the unthankful and to the evil. This is why He keeps His house open still—that those who are ready to perish may come—that the worthless and undeserving may come, and participate in the bounties of His grace.

Jesus Christ will make you welcome, though society will not own you. Is there any man here that doubts it? My friend, come and try the Lord. There is not on earth a man that dares to say, “I went to Christ, and He cast me away.” You may perambulate hell itself, and never find one who can truthfully say, “I believed in Jesus, and He would not save me.”

Come, friend, if He rejects you, you will be the first of His castaways. We will have you up in the Tabernacle, and exhibit you as the man that Jesus Christ would not save, and then I will shut up shop, and hold my tongue forever. I will never dare to preach the Gospel again if one comes to Jesus be rejected by Him. It never has happened, and never shall.

Come and welcome. Jesus welcomed the crowd, and He will welcome you, and He will prove that you are welcome by doing for you what He did for them. He will teach you, teach you concerning the kingdom, teach you repentance, teach you faith. He will teach you so effectually that you shall learn truly, and your heart beneath His teaching shall be changed and sanctified, and you shall become a new creature.

More than that, He will heal you. Whatever the disease of your soul may be, only come to my Master and He will banish every plague of doubt, or palsy of fear, or leprosy of sin, or fever of lust. There is no balm in Gilead, but Jesus Christ is the never-failing Physician, and He can make *you* whole at once.

Nor is this all, for He will feed you with the bread of heaven—with better than angels’ meat will He sustain you, and satisfy your heart and mind with all that you can desire.

Thus I have labored to encourage you. O that the Spirit of God may give effect to my words.

III. Thirdly, we use our text as A LESSON.

Dear friends, if Jesus Christ welcomes all that come to Him, let all of us who are His followers imitate His example, and give a warm welcome to those who seek the Lord. Whatever their motive is, whenever we see people coming to the worship of God, and especially when we see them a little impressed, let us welcome them heartily.

It is a grievous sin when strangers come in, and find themselves stared at as if they were wild beasts—nobody offers them a seat—they may stand till they drop, but nobody cares an atom about them. And they may come again, and go in and out for the month together, and never a word is spoken to them. I pray you, do not so. But on the contrary, look out personally for individuals, and try to win them for Jesus.

There has been a great wind lately, and it has shaken down much fruit. But windfall fruit is seldom good for much. Billy Bray used to say, “The best fruit is handpicked,” and I believe the best converts in the world are those for whom loving hearts wait, and pray, and plead.

Sometimes, after a great sermon, or when there has been a mighty shaking under a revival, many come down who are only windfalls and of very small account. But those whom you win one by one, by caring about them, minding their estate, and watching their growth—these are the best of fruit and well worth storing.

Mind, then, this rule—when you go gathering fruit, go with a smile. Men are brought to Jesus by cheerfulness far sooner than by gloom.

Jesus welcomed men. His looks said, "I am glad to see you." He seemed to say to the people who flocked after Him into His retirement, "I did not invite you at this time, for I desired to be alone. But as you are so earnest and eager after Me, I am prepared to do what you desire. You are welcome to all that I can do for you."

In winning souls, use an abundance of smiles. Have you not seen in one of our magazines an account of seven people saved by a smile? It is a pretty story. A clergyman passes by a window on his way to church. A baby was being dandled there, and he smiled at the baby, and the baby at him. Another time he passed—the baby was there again, and once more he smiled.

Soon baby was taken to the window at the hour when he usually passed. They did not know who the gentleman was, but one day two of the older children followed to see where he went on a Sunday. They followed him to church, and as he preached in a winning way, they told their father and mother, who felt interest enough in their baby's friend to wish to go.

Thus in a short time, a godless family that had previously neglected the worship of God was brought to the Savior because the minister smiled at the baby. I never heard of anybody getting to heaven through frowning at a baby, or at anyone else. Certain wonderfully good persons go through the world as if they were commissioned to impress everybody with the awful solemnity of religion—they resemble a winter's night without a moon. Nobody seems attracted, nor even impressed by them, except in the direction of dislike.

I saw a life buoy the other day covered with luminous paint. How bright it seemed, how suitable to be cast upon the dark sea to help a drowning man! An ordinary life buoy he would never see, but this was so bright and luminous that a man must see it.

Give me a soul-winner bright with holy joy, for he will be seen by the sorrowing soul, and his help will be accepted. Cover your lives with the luminous paint of cheerfulness, compounded by joy and peace through believing. Smile Christ into mourners' hearts by God's grace. It can be done if the Holy Spirit will only give you a lesson.

Jesus welcomed them—let us warmly welcome all comers. Do not seem to say to them, "You want to be saved, do you?" "Yes." "You had better mind what you are about. You know there are a great many hypocrites. I am not sure of your sincerity. Do you really want to be saved?"

If the seeker cries, "O sir, what must I do to be saved?" do not answer with icy words—"Do not be so excited. Be calm, and let me lay the Gospel before you in a clear, didactic manner, for fear you should be deceived. I hope it is all right with you, and that these desires are not mere natural excitement, but are the fruit of the Spirit. Still it is my duty to be faithful and put you to the test."

Why, my dear friend, if you had been in a right state of heart, you would have led that man into the kingdom of heaven before you had got half through those cautious remarks. Give Him a loving, hearty welcome—not a cold, suspicious searching. Say, "Do you want to be saved?" "Yes." "Then come and welcome. Believe in the Lord Jesus and He is yours. You want Jesus Christ, do you?" "Yes." "Come along—He waits to be gracious. He is here present, and all you have to do is to trust in Him."

I put this in a very simple way, but there is very much in it. Jesus, the Master, welcomed sinners. Let all His servants wear the livery of love, and set wide open every door for sinners to enter.

"But perhaps there is very little good in these who say they are seeking?" The remark is no doubt correct. Perhaps there is no good at all in them. What then? Let us welcome them all the same. Did not our Lord receive you when there was no good in you? Should not you also receive such, and set the Gospel before them, that God the Holy Spirit may bless them?

"But some are so poor that if they are received into the church they will be of no service to it—they will rather be more dependent upon its charity than helpful to its funds." Yes, but these are the sort of people that our Lord used to welcome, and why should not we? It will be an evil day for any church when it despises any class of men. There will come a curse upon a church that looks to men's garments and purses, and values them according to the guinea stamp. This will never do.

Is he a man? Then he has an immortal soul about him. Does he seek the Savior? Christ bids us encourage him. Is he a sinner? Christ can cleanse him. Is he troubled about his sin? Jesus can give him rest. Let us help him, however loathsome his past life may have been, and however little he may be able to do in return.

If anyone here wishes to find mercy and cannot find it, I would during the last minute of my discourse try to welcome him. Friend, you say, “How can I be saved!” Have you ever heard the Gospel, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved’? “Yes,” say you, “but I do not think I believe aright.”

Listen. Here is a verse for you. Get out your New Testament. Look at John 5:24. Turn it down. Turn it down, and read it when you get home. I beg all of you who have not found the Savior to mark that passage—read it carefully, and keep on reading it over and over again for an hour. Read it over ten thousand times, if need be, for I want you to find salvation through it. I know this text will save any man living, God blessing it to him.

Here it is—“*Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*”

What a grand verse! Is there anything in it about believing *aright*? Not a syllable. Only let a man truly believe and he “hath” (it is not said, “shall have”)—he has now “everlasting life.” Mark that—not a life that will die out in a quarter of a year if he does not mind—no, but “hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

Suck at that text, poor soul—salvation lies in it. Believe in Jesus and you are saved. May God help you to believe it by His blessed Spirit, and you shall live unto Him henceforth and forever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 6:7-44

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—414, 490, 509

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.