

A PREVIEW OF OUR DEPARTURE

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Buddy Dano, Pastor

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Part One: You Believe in God, In Me Also Believe

A PREVIEW OF OUR DEPARTURE

First: Faith in God and faith in Christ. "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in Me." The twelve were sitting in the upper room, stupefied with the dreary, half understood prospect of Christ's departure. The Lord, forgetting His own burden, turns to comfort and encourage them. The One departing, encouraging those over His departure and their remaining. These sweet and great words, most singularly blend gentleness and dignity. Who can reproduce the cadence of soothing tenderness, as soft as a mother's hand, in that.

"Let not your heart be troubled." Who can fail to feel the tone of majesty in that, "Believe in God, believe also in Me." The one "Believe in God," an imperative, and the next "believe in Me," is also an imperative.

Now the first thing you see here, that strikes us is that Jesus Christ here points to Himself as the object of precisely the same trust and belief in which it is to be given to God. It is because of our familiarity with these words that blinds us to the wonderfulness and their greatness. Try to hear them, try to read them for the first time, and bring into remembrance the circumstances in which they were spoken.

Here is a man sitting among a handful of His friends, who is within 24 hours of a shameful death, which to all appearances was the utter annihilation of all His claims and hopes. And He says, a day before His departure, "Trust in God, trust in Me." I think that if you have heard that for the first time, you would understand a little better than some of us do the depth of its meaning.

What is it that Christ asks for here? Or, rather let me say, what is it **that Christ offers to us here?** For we must not look at these words as a demand or as a command. But

rather as a gracious invitation to do what is life and blessing to do. It is a very low and inadequate interpretation of these words which takes them as meaning little more than, "Believe in God," believe that He is, "believe in Me," believe that I am.

But it is scarcely less to suppose that the mere assent of the understanding to His teaching is all that Christ is asking for here, by no means. What He invites us to goes a great deal deeper than that. The essence of it is an act of the will and of the soul, not of the understanding at all.

A man may believe in Him as a historic Person, may accept Him, all that is said about Him here, and yet not be within the sight of the trust in Him of which He here speaks.

For the essence of the whole is not the intellectual process of assent to a proposition. But the intensely personal act of yielding up will and soul to a living Person. Angels know there is a God and tremble, but that doesn't mean that they receive Him as personal Saviour. Faith does not grasp a doctrine but a heart. The trust which Christ requires is the bond that unites souls with Him, and the very life of it is entire committal of myself to him in ALL my relations and for ALL my needs, and absolute utter confidence in Him as ALL SUFFICIENT for everything that I can require. Let us get away from the cold intellectualism of "belief," into the warm atmosphere of "trust" and we will understand much better than by many volumes what Jesus Christ here means and the sphere and the power and the blessedness of that faith which Jesus Christ requires.

"You believe in God, believe also in Me." Note also that whatever may be this believing in Him, which He asks from us or invites us to render to Him, **it is precisely the same**

thing which He bids us to render to God. “In God, in Me.”

The two clauses in the original bring out the idea even more vividly than in our version. Because the order of the words in the latter clause is inverted, and they read literally this way: “Believe in God, in Me also believe.”

Believe, God. Me, believe. The purpose of the inversion is to put these two, God and Christ, as close together as possible. And to put the two identical emotions at the beginning and at the end. Believe, believe. God, and Me. And these are the two extremes and outsides of the whole sentence. Believe is one side of the parenthesis and believe closes out the other side of the parenthesis, and God and Christ are in the middle.

Could language be more deliberately adopted and molded, even in its consecution and arrangements, to enforce this thought, **that whatever it is that we give to Christ, is the very same thing that we give to God?**

So here he purposes Himself as the worthy and adequate Recipient of all these emotions of confidence, submission, resignation, which make up Christianity in its deepest sense. That tone is by no means singular in this place. It is the uniform tone and characteristic of the Lord’s teachings. Let me remind you just in a sentence of one or two instances. What did He think of Himself, who stood before the world and, with arms outstretched, like that great white Christ in Thornwalden’s lovely statue, said to all the troop of languid and burdened and fatigued ones crowding at his feet, “Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” That surely is a Divine prerogative.

What did He think of Himself who said “All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father?” What did He think of Himself who, in that very sermon on the mount, (to which advocates of a maimed and mutilated Christianity tell us they pin their faith, instead of to mystical doctrines), declared that He Himself was the Judge of humanity and that men should stand at His bar and receive from Him “according to the deeds done in the body?” Upon any honest interpreting of these

Gospels, and unless you that very avowedly go picking and choosing amongst His Words, accepting this and that and rejecting this and that, you cannot eliminate from the scriptural representation of Jesus Christ, the fact that He claimed as His own the emotions of the heart to which any God has a right and only God can satisfy.

Now I am not dwelling upon that point, we have to nevertheless take into account if we want to estimate the character of Jesus Christ, as a Teacher and as a man. I would not turn away from Him any imperfect conceptions, as they seem to me, of His nature and His work, rather would I foster them, and lead them on to a fuller recognition of the full Christ, but this I am bound to say, that for my part I believe that nothing but the wildest caprice dealing with the Gospels according to one’s own subjective fancies, irrespective altogether of the evidence, can strike out from the teaching of Jesus Christ this its characteristic difference.

What signalizes Him, and separates Him from all other so-called religious teachers is not the clearness or the tenderness with which He reiterated the Truths about the Divine Father’s love, or about morality, and justice, and Truth, and goodness, but the peculiarity of His call to the world is, “Believe in Me.” And if he said that, or anything like it, and if the representations of His teaching in these four Gospels, which are the only source from which we get any notion of Him, at all, are to be accepted. Why, then, one of two things follows. Either He was wrong, and then He was a crazy enthusiast, only acquitted of blasphemy because convicted of insanity, or else, “He was God manifested in the flesh.”

It is vain to bow down before a fancy portrait of a bit of Christ, and to exalt the humble sage of Nazareth, and to leave out the very thing that makes the difference between Him and all others, namely, these either audacious or most true claims to be the Son of God, the worthy recipient and the adequate object of man’s Christian emotions, “Believe in God, in Me also believe.”

Secondly, notice that faith in Christ and faith in God are not two, but one. These two clauses on the surface present juxtaposition. Looked at more closely, they present interpenetration and identity. Jesus Christ does not merely set Himself by the side of God, nor are we worshipers of two Gods when we bow before Jesus Christ and bow before the Father, **but faith in Christ is faith in God. And faith in God which is not faith in Christ is imperfect.** And is incomplete, and will never ever last long. To trust in the Son is to trust in the Father, to trust in the Father is to trust in the Son.

What then is the underlying truth that is here? How come that these two objects blend into one, like two figures in a stereoscope and that faith which flows to Jesus Christ rests upon God? This is the underlying Truth, that Jesus Christ Himself Divine, is the Divine Revealer of God.

Therefore there is no real knowledge of the real God in the depth of His love, the tenderness of His nature, or the lustrousness of His holiness. How there is no certitude, how the God that we see outside of Jesus Christ is sometimes doubt, sometimes hope, sometimes far, always far off and vague, an abstraction rather than a person, "a stream of tendency, without us, that which is unnameable and the like."

We know the thought that Jesus Christ has showed us the Father, and has brought a God to our souls whom we can love, who we can really, though not fully, of whom we can be sure with a certainty which is deep as the certitude of our own personal being, that He has brought to us a God before whom we do not need to crouch afar off, that He has brought to us a God whom we can trust.

Very significant is it that Christianity alone puts **the very heart of spirituality in the act of trust.** Other so-called religions put it in dread, worship, service, and the like. Jesus Christ alone says the bond between man and God is that blessed one of trust. And He says so because He alone brings us a God whom it is not ridiculous to tell men to trust. **And on the other hand, the Truth that under-**

lies this is not only that Jesus Christ is the Revealer of God, but that He Himself is Divine. Jesus Christ revealed in Himself His Father's Divinity and essence and His own Divinity and essence.

Light shines through a window, but the light and the glass that makes it visible have nothing in common with one another. **The God-head shines through Christ, but He is not a mere transparent medium.** We are, as it were, windows, lights in the world, but He is the Light of the world. **It is Himself that He is showing us when He is showing us God.** "He that hath seen Me hath seen (not the light that streams through Me) but hath seen in Me the Father." **And because He Himself is Divine and the Divine Revealer, therefore faith that grasps Him is inseparably one with the faith that grasps God.**

Men could look upon a Moses, an Isaiah, or a Paul, and in them recognize the emanation of the Divinity that imparted itself through them, but the medium was forgotten in proportion as which it revealed was beheld. **You cannot forget Christ in order to see God more clearly, but to behold Him is to behold God.**

And if that be true, these two principle follow. One is that all imperfect revelation of God is prophetic of, and leads up towards, the perfect revelation in Jesus Christ.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews gives that truth in a very striking fashion. He compares all other means of knowing God to fragmentary syllables of a great word, of which one was given to one man and another to another.

God, "spake at sundry times and in manifold portions, to the fathers by the prophets," but the whole word is articulately "uttered by the Son, in whom He has spoken unto us in these last times."

The imperfect revelation, by means of those who were merely mediums for the revelation leads up to Him who is Himself **the revelation, the Revealer, and the Revealed.**

And in like manner, all the imperfect faith that, laying hold of other fragmentary means

of knowing God, has tremendously tried to trust Him, finds its climax and consummate flower in the full-blossomed faith that lays hold upon Jesus Christ.

The unconscious prophecies of heathendom, the trust that select souls up and down the world have put in one whom they dimly apprehended, the faith of the Old Testament saints, the rudimentary beginnings of a knowledge of God, and of a trust in Him which are found in men today, and among all us, outside of the circle of Christianity, all these things are manifestly incomplete as a building reared half its height, and waiting for the Cornerstone to be brought forth, the full revelation of God, in Christ, and the intelligent, and full acceptance of Him and faith in Him.

And another thing is true, that without faith in Christ such faith in God as is possible is feeble, incomplete, and will not last long. Historically a pure theism is all but impotent. There is only one example of it on a large scale in the world, and that is a kind of bastard Christianity, Mohammedanism, and we all know what good that is as a religion.

There are plenty of people among us nowadays who claim to be very advanced thinkers, and who call themselves "theists," and not Christians. Well, I venture to say that that is a phase that will not last. There is little substance in it. **The God whom men know outside of Jesus Christ is a poor, nebulous thing, an idea, not a reality.** He, or rather it, is a film of cloud shaped into a vague form through which you can see the stars. It has little power to restrain. It has less to inspire and impel. It has still less to comfort. It has least of all to satisfy the heart. You will have to get something more substantial than the far-off God of an unchristian theism if you mean to sway the world and to satisfy men's hearts.

And so we come to this, maybe the Word may be fitting for some to listen, "Believe in God, (and you may say) believe also in Christ." For I am sure when the stress comes and you want a God, unless your God is the God revealed in Jesus Christ, **he will be a powerless deity.** If you have not faith in

Christ, you will not long have faith in God that is vital and worth anything.

Lastly, this trust in Christ is the secret of a quiet soul. It is of no use to say to men, "Let not your hearts be troubled," unless you finish the verse and say, "Believe in God, believe also in Christ." **For unless we trust we shall certainly be troubled, especially in departing.** The state of man in this world is like that of some of those sunny island in southern seas, around which there often rave the wildest cyclones, and which carry in their bosoms beneath all their riotous luxuriance of verdant beauty, hidden fires, which ever and anon shake the solid Earth and spread destruction. Storms without and earthquakes within, that is the condition of humanity.

And where is our best to come from? All other defenses are weak and poor. We have heard about "take a pill against earthquakes." That is what the comforts and tranquilizing which the world supplies may fairly be likened to. **Unless we trust we are, and we shall be, and should be, troubled.** If we trust we may be quiet.

Trust is always tranquility. To cast a burden off myself on other's shoulders is always a rest. But trust in Christ brings infinitude on my side. **Submission is repose.** When we cease to kick against the pricks they cease to prick and wound us. **Trust opens the heart,** like the windows of the ark tossing upon the black and fatal flood, for the entrance of the peaceful dove with the olive branch in its mouth. "I will keep Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Me, because he trusteth in Me."

Trust brings Christ to my side in all His GRACE, tenderness, and greatness and sweetness. If I trust, "all is right that seems most wrong." If I trust, conscience is quiet. If I trust, life becomes a solemn scorn of ills (You can laugh at death). If I trust, inward unrest is changed into tranquility and mad passions are cast out from Him that "sits clothed and in His right mind," at the feet of Jesus Christ. "The wicked is like a troubled sea which cannot rest."

But if I trust, my soul will become like the glassy ocean when all the storms sleep, and birds of peace sit brooding on the charmed wave. “Peace I leave with you.” “Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Me.” Help us, Lord, to trust our souls to your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then in Him we will find you, Father, and in Him we will

find eternal rest. This is our first confidence that we get from the Lord’s departure, which we can carry over into our departure. Remember this passage was spoken 24 hours before the Lord’s own personal departure, when “He was absent WITH His body and face to face with the Lord.” “You believe in God, in Me also believe.”

Part Two: Many Mansions

A PREVIEW OF OUR DEPARTURE

“You believe in God, believe also in Me.”
Why? “In My Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you.”

Sorrow needs simple words for its consolation, and simple words are the best clothing for the largest Truths, especially when someone is departing, a loved one. These 11 poor men were crushed and desolate at the thought of Christ’s going, **they fancied that if He left them, they lost Him.**

When someone departs, you don’t lose them. And so, in simple, childlike words, which the weakest can grasp, and in which the most troubled could find peace, He said to them after having encouraged their trust in Him. **He said, there is plenty of room for you as well as for Me where I am going, and the frankness of our conversations in the past might convince you that if I was going to leave you, I would have told you about it.** And that where I am going there you will be also, I will never ever leave you.

He said “Did I ever hide anything from you that was painful? Did I ever allure you to follow Me by false promises? Should I have kept silence about it if our separation was to be eternal?” So simply, as a mother might hush her baby upon her breast, He soothes their sorrows. “That ye sorrow not as others which have no hope.” And yet in these quiet words, so level to the lowest apprehension, there are great Truths lying here, far deeper than we yet have appreciated, and which will enfold themselves in their majesty and their GRACE throughout all eternity.

“In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you.” There is only one other occasion recorded in which our Lord used this expression, and it occurs in this Gospel near the beginning, where in the narrative of the first

cleansing of the temple we read that He said, “Make not My Father’s house a house of merchandise.” The earlier use of the words may help to throw light upon one aspect of this later employment of if, for there blend in the image the two ideas of what we can call domestic familiarity and of that great future as being the reality of which the earthly temple was intended to be the dim prophecy and shadow.

Its courts, its many chambers, its ample porches, which room for thronging worshippers, represented in some poor way the wide sweep and space of that higher house, and the sense of sonship, which drew the Boy to His Father’s house in the earliest hours of conscious childhood, speaks here. Think for a moment of how sweet and familiar the conception of Heaven as the “Father’s house” makes it to us. There is something awful, even to the best and holiest souls, in the thought of even the glories beyond.

The circumstance of death, which is its portal, our utter unacquaintance with all that lies behind the veil, the terrible silence and distance which falls upon our dearest ones as they are sucked into the cloud, all tend to make us feel that there is much that is solemn and awful even in the thought of eternal future blessedness.

But how it is all softened when we say, “My Father’s house.” “In the house of my Father,” literally. Most of us have long since left behind us the sweet security, the sense of absence of all responsibility, the assurance of defense and provision, which used to be ours, when we lived as children in an earthly father’s house, and the principle that the father provides for his household. But we may all look forward to the renewal, in far nobler form, of these early days, when the father’s

house meant the inexpugnable fortress where no evil could befall us, the abundant home where all wants were supplied, and where the shyest and the timidest child, could feel at ease and secure. It is all coming again, children of God, and amidst the august and unimaginable glories of that future, the old feeling of being little children, nestling safe in the Father's house, will find our quiet hearts once more. "There's no place like home."

And if you have never had that type of a childhood with a father's care, you will in the future. No orphans unattended and looked over in Heaven. And then consider how the conception of that Father's house, the future of the Father's house suggests answers to so many of our questions about the relationship of the inmates to one another. Are they to dwell isolated in their several mansions? Is that the way in which children in home dwell with each other? Surely, if He be the Father, and Heaven be His house, the relation of the redeemed to one another must have in it more than all the sweet familiarity and unrestrained frankness which subsists in the families on Earth.

A solitary Heaven would be but half a Heaven, and would ill correspond with the hopes that inevitable spring from the representation of it as "My Father's house." Do you come from a big family?

But consider further that this great and tender name for Heaven has its deepest meaning in the conception of it as a spiritual state of which the essential elements are the loving manifestation and presence of God as Father, the perfect consciousness of sonship, the happy union of all children in one great family, and the derivation of all their blessedness from their elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The earthly temple, to which there is some allusion in this great metaphor, was the place in which the Divine glory was manifested to seeking souls, though in symbol, yet also in reality. And the representation of our verse blends the two ideas of the free, frank, intercourse of the home and of the magnificent revelations of the Holy of Holies.

Under either aspect of the phrase, whether we think of "My Father's house" as a temple, or as a home, it sets before us, **as the main blessedness and glory of Heaven, the vision of the Father, the consciousness of sonship, and the complete union with Him.**

There are many subsidiary and more outward blessednesses and glories which shine dimly through the haze of metaphors and negations, by which alone a state of which we have no experience can be revealed to us, but these are secondary.

The Heaven of Heaven is the possession of God the Father, through the Son in the expanding spirits of His sons. The sovereign and filial position which Jesus Christ in His manhood occupies in that higher house, and which He shares with all those who by Him have received the adoption of son, is the very heart and nerve of this great metaphor. And we say AB BA Father.

"In My Father's house." Also an illustration of marriage and family, and a heavenly nation. But I think we must go a step further than that, and recognize that in the image there is inherent the teaching that that glorious future is not merely a state, but also a place. "I go to prepare a place for you." Local associations are not to be divorced from these words, and although we can say but little about such a matter, yet everything in the teaching of Scripture points to the thought that howsoever true it may be that the essence of Heaven is condition, yet that also Heaven has a local habitation and is a place in the great universe of God.

Jesus Christ has at this moment a human body, glorified. That body, as Scripture teaches us, is somewhere, and where He is three shall also His servants be.

In the context he goes on to tell us **that He goest to prepare a place for us**. And though I would not insist upon the literal interpretation of such words, yet distinctly the drift of the representation is in the direction of localizing, though not of materializing the abode of the Blessed. So, I think we can say, not merely that "what" He is that shall also

His servants be. But that “where” He is there shall also His servants be.

And from the representation of our text, though we cannot fathom all of its depths, we can at least grasp this, which gives solidity and reality to our contemplations of the future, that Heaven is a place, full of all sweet security and homelike repose, where God is made known in every soul and to every consciousness as a loving Father, and of which all the inhabitants are knit together in the frankest fraternal intercourse, conscious of the Father’s love, and rejoicing in the abundant provision of His royal house.

And there is a second thought to be suggested from these words, and that is of the ample room in this great house. The original purpose of the words of our text, I have already reminded you, **was simply to sooth the fears of a handful of disciples**, upon the Lord’s departure. There was room where Christ went for 11 poor men. Yes, room enough for them. But Christ’s prescient eye looked down the ages, and saw all the unborn millions that would yet be drawn to Him, uplifted on the cross, and some glow of satisfaction flitted across His sorrow, as He saw from afar the result of the impending travail of His soul in the multitudes by whom God’s heavenly house should yet be filled.

“Many mansions.”

Many mansions widens out far beyond our grasp. Maybe that upper room, like most of the roof chambers in Jewish homes, was open to the skies. And while He spoke, the innumerable lights that blaze in that clear Heaven shone down upon them and He may have pointed to these. The “better” Abraham perhaps looked forth like his prototype. On the starry heavens, and saw in the vision of the future those who through Him should receive the adoption of sons, and dwell for ever in the house of the Lord, “So many as the stars in the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.”

If we could only widen our measurement of the walls of the New Jerusalem to the measurement of that golden rod which the man, that is the angel, as John says, applied to it,

we should understand how much bigger it is than any of these poor sects and communities of ours here on Earth. If we would lay to heart, as we ought to do, the deep measuring of that indefinite, “many” in our text, it would rebuke our narrowness and expand our graciousness.

There will be a great many occupants of the mansions in Heaven that Christians here on Earth will be very much surprised to see there, and thousands will find their entrance there that never found their entrance into any communities of so-called Christians here on Earth.

That one word, “many,” POLUS, which is much, great, many, should deepen our confidence in the triumphs of Christ’s cross. And it may be used to heighten our confidence as to our own poor selves.

A chamber in the great temple awaits for each of us, and the questions is, “Shall we occupy it, or shall we not?” The old rabbis had a tradition, which, like great many of their apparently foolish sayings, covers in picturesque guise a very deep truth. They said that, however many the throngs of worshipers who came up to Jerusalem at the Passover, the streets of the city and the courts of the sanctuary were never crowded. And it is so with that great city. There is room for all, for you. There are throngs, but no crowds. Each finds a place in the ample sweep of the Father’s house, like some of the great palaces that barbaric eastern kings used to build, in whose courts armies might encamp, and the chamber of which were counted by the thousand. And surely in all that ample accommodation, you and I may find some corner where we, if we will, may lodge forever more.

“Mansions” means places of permanent abodes. MONE is the Greek word. Primarily a staying, abiding, akin to; MENO, to abide, denotes an abode. The same word is translated in this same chapter, verse 23, “abode.” It suggests two thoughts. So sweet to travelers and toilers in this fleeting, laboring life, **of unchangeableness, and repose.** Some have supposed that the variety in the attainments of the redeemed, which is reasonable and scrip-

tural, might be deduced from our verse. But that does not seem to be relevant to our Lord's purpose. One other suggestion may be made without enlarging upon it. There is only one other occasion in this Gospel in which the word here translated "mansions" is employed, and it is this: "We will come and make our ABODE with him."

Our mansion is in God. God's dwelling place is in us. So ask yourselves, "Have you a place in that heavenly home?" When prodigal children go away from the Father's house, sometimes a broken-hearted parent will keep the boy's room just as it used to be when he was young and pure, and will hope and weary through long days for him to come back and occupy it again. God is keeping a room for you in His house. Do you see that you fill it?

In the next place note there the sufficiency of Christ's revelation for our needs. "If it were not so, I would have told you." He sets Himself forward in very august fashion for us as being the Revealer and Opener of that house for us. There is a singular tone about all our Lord's few references to the future, a tone of decisiveness, not as if He were speaking as a man might do, that which He had thought out, or which had come to Him, but as if He was speaking of what He Himself beheld. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

He stands like One on a mountain top, looking down into the valleys beyond, and telling His friends in the plain behind Him what He sees. He speaks of the unseen world always as One who has been in it, and who was reporting experiences, and not giving forth opinions. His knowledge was the knowledge of One who dwelt with the Father and left the house in order to find and bring back His wandering brethren.

It was, "His own calm home, His habitation from eternity." And therefore He could tell us with decisiveness, with simplicity, with assurance, all which we need to know about the geography of that unknown land the plan of that, by us unvisited, house. Very remarkable, therefore, is it, that with this tone there should be such reticence in Christ's reference to the future. The text implies the "rationale" of such reticence. "If it were not so, I would have told you." I tell you all that you need, though I tell you a great deal less than you sometimes wish.

The gaps in our knowledge of the future, seeing that we have such a Revealer as we have in Christ, are remarkable. **But our text suggests this to us, we have as much as we need.** If you needed to know, I would have told you. I know and many of you know, by bitter experience, how many questions, the answers to which would seem to us to be such a lightening of our burdens, our desolated and troubled hearts suggest about that future, and how vainly we ply Heaven with questions and interrogate the unreply oracle.

But we know as much as we need to know. "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. And in My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you."

We know that God is there.

We know that it is our Father's house.

We know that Jesus Christ our Saviour is in it.

We know that the dwellers there are a family; children, sons.

We know that sweet security and ample provision are there.

And for the rest, if we needed to have heard more, He would have told us.

"My knowledge of that life is small.
"The eye of my faith is dim.
"But it is enough that Christ knows all,
"And I shall be with Him."

Let the gaps remain. The gaps are part of the revelation and we know enough for faith, love and hope.

Nay, we not widen the application of that thought to other matters than to our bounded and fragmentary conceptions of a future life? In times like present, of doubt and unrest, it is a great piece of Christian wisdom to recognize the limitations of our knowledge and the sufficiency of the fragments we have.

What do we get a revelation for? To solve the theological puzzles and dogmatic difficulties? To inflate us with the pride of "quasi omniscience." Or to present to us our God in Christ for faith, love, and hope; for obedience for imitation?

Surely the latter, and for such purpose we have enough. So let us recognize that our knowledge is very partial. A great stretch of wall is blank, and there is not a window in it. If there had been need for one, it would have been struck out. He has been pleased to leave many things obscure, not arbitrarily, as to try our faith, for the implication of the words before us is that the relation between Him and us binds Him to the utmost possible frankness, and that all which we need and He can tell us He does tell, but for high reasons, and because of the very conditions of our present environment, which forbid the more complete and all around knowledge.

So let us recognize our limitations. We know in part, and we are wise if we affirm in

part. Hold by the central light, which is Jesus Christ. "Many thing did Jesus which are not written in this Book," and many gaps and deficiencies from a human point of view exist in the contexture of revelation. But "These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ." For which enough has been told us, "and that believing you may have life in His Name."

If that purpose be accomplished in us, God will not have spoken nor we have heard in vain. Let us hold by the central light, and then the circumference of darkness will gradually retreat, and a wider sphere of illumination be ours, until the day when we enter our mansion in our Father's house.

And then, "In Thy light shall we see light." "And we shall know even as we are known." Let our elder Brother, Christ, lead you back to the Father's bosom and be sure that if you trust Him and listen to Him, you will know enough on Earth to turn Earth into a foretaste of Heaven, and will find at last your place in the Father's house beside the Brother who prepared it for you.

So, we have two basic principles so far in our study of the preview of our departure in the Lord's own words, about His personal departure just one day before He departed.

One: "If you believe in God, believe in Me."

And then: if you have, "Then in My Father's house there are many mansions." And then, "If it were not so, He would have told you so."

Part Three: The Forerunner

A PREVIEW OF OUR DEPARTURE

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1, 2.

What Divine simplicity and depth are in these last words of our Lord just one day before His own personal departure. They carry us up into the unseen world, and beyond time, and yet a little child can hold on them, and mourning hearts and dying men find peace and sweetness and GRACE in them.

A very familiar image underlies them. It was customarily for travelers in those old days to send some of their party on in advance, to find lodging and make arrangements for them in some great city. Many a time one or other of the disciples had been "sent before his face into every place where he himself should come." On that very morning, the two of them had gone in, at his bidding, from Bethany to make ready the table at which they were sitting.

Christ here takes that office upon Himself. The emblem is homely, the thing meant is transcendent. Not less wonderful is the blending of majesty and lowliness, GRACE. The office which He takes upon Himself is that of an inferior and a Servant. And yet the discharge of it, in the present case, implies His authority over every corner of the universe. GRACE reigns, exalted GRACE. His immortal life, and the sufficiency of His presence do make a Heaven.

Nor can we fail to notice the blending of another pair of opposites, **His certainty of His impending death, and His certainty, not withstanding and thereby, of His continual work and His final return, are inseparable interlaced here.** How is it that, in all premonitions of His death, **Jesus Christ never spoke about**

it as a failure or as the interruption of, or end of, His activity, but always as the transition, to, and the condition of, His wider work?

"I go," "and if I go," "I will return," "And take you to Myself." So then we have three things here, **the departure with its purpose, the return, and the perfected union.**

First, the departure:

Our Lord's going away from that little group was a journey in two stages. Calvary was the first, Olivet was the second. He means by the phrase the whole continuous process which begins with His death and ends in His ascension and session. Both are embraced in His words, and each co-operates to the attainment of the great purpose.

He prepares a place for us by His death. The high priest, in the ancient ritual, once a year was privileged to lift the heavy veil and pass into the darkened chamber, where only the light between the cherubim was visible, because He bore in His hand the blood of the sacrifice.

For in our New Testament system the path into "the holiest of all," the realization of the most intimate fellowship with heavenly things and communion with God Himself, are made possible and the way patent for every foot, because Jesus Christ has died.

And so the communion upon Earth, so the perfecting of the communion in the heavens. Who of us could step within the awful sanctities, or stand serene amidst the region of eternal light and stainless purity, unless, in His death, He had borne the sins of the world, and having "overcome" its sharpness by enduring its blow, had opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers?

Old legends tell us of magic gates that resisted all attempts to force them but upon which, if one drop of a certain blood fell, they flew open. And so, by His death, Christ has opened the gates and made the Heaven of perfect purity, a dwelling place for sinful men.

But the second stage of His departure is that which more eminently is in Christ's mind here. He prepares a place for us by His entrance into and His dwelling in the heavenly places. The words are obscure because we have but few others with which to compare them, and to no experience by which to interpret them.

We know so little about the matter that it is not wise to say much. **But though there be fast tracts of darkness round the little spot of light, this should only make the spot of light more vivid and more precious.** We know little, but we know enough for mind and soul to rest upon. Our ignorance of the ways to which Christ by His ascension prepares a haven for His followers should neither breed doubts nor disregard of His assurance that He does.

If Christ had not ascended, would there have been, a place, at all? He has gone with a human body, which, glorified as it is, still has relations to space, **and must be somewhere.** And we may even say that His ascending up on high, has made a place where His servants are, but apart from that suggestion, which, maybe, is going beyond our limits, **we may see that Christ's presence in Heaven is needful to make it a heaven for poor human souls.**

There, as here, Scripture assures us, and throughout eternity as today, Jesus Christ is the Mediator of all human knowledge and possession of God. It is from Him and through Him and to Him that there come to men, whether they be men on Earth or men in the heavens, all that they know, all that they hope, all that they enjoy, of the wisdom, love, beauty, peace, power, which flow from God.

Take away from the Heaven of the Christian expectation that which comes to the Spirit through Jesus Christ and you have nothing left. He and His meditation and the ministration alone make the brightness and the

blessedness of that high state. **The very glories of all that lies beyond the veil would have an aspect appalling and bewildering to us, unless our Brother was there.** Like some poor savages brought into a great city, or rustics into the presence of a king and his court, **we should be ill at ease amidst the glories and solemnities of that future life unless we saw standing there our "Kinsman," to whom we can turn, and who makes it possible for us to feel that it is home.**

Not only did He go to prepare a place, but He is continuously preparing it for us all through the ages. We have to think of a double form of the work of Christ, His past work in His earthly life, and His present work in His exaltation. **We have to think of a double form of His present activity, His work with and in us here on Earth, and His work for us there in the heavens.**

That which the Scripture represents in a metaphor, the full comprehension of which surpasses our present powers and experiences as being His priestly intercession, and that which our text represents in a metaphor, maybe a little more level to our apprehension, as being His preparing a place for us. Behind the veil there is a working Christ, who, in the heavens, is preparing a place for all that have received Him as personal Saviour.

In the next place notice His return from His departure. The purpose of our Lord's departure, as set forth by Himself here, guarantees for us His coming back again. That is the force of the simple argumentation of our text, and of the pathetic and soothing repetition of the gracious sweet words. "I go to prepare a place for you, and If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself." I go, I go, I will come again. For you, for you, receive you unto Myself. You, you, you...

Because the departure had for its purpose the preparing of the place, therefore it is necessary followed by a return. He who went away as the Forerunner, had not done His work until He comes back and as a Guide leads those for whom He had prepared the place which He had prepared for them.

Now that return of our Lord, like His departure, may be considered as having two stages. Unquestionably the main meaning and application of the words is to that final and personal coming which stands at the end of history, and to which the hopes of every Christian soul ought to be steadfastly directed. He will "so come in like manner as He has gone." We are not to water down such words as these into anything short of a return precisely corresponding in its method to the departure, and as the departure was visible, corporeal, literal, personal, and local, so the return is to be visible, corporeal, literal, personal, and local, too. He is to come as He went a visible manhood, only throned amongst the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. This is the aim that He sets before him in His departure. He leaves in order that He may come back again.

Remember, and let us live in the strength of the remembrance, that this return ought to be the prominent subject of Christian aspiration and desire. There is much about the conception of that solemn return with all the convulsion that attend it, and the judgment of which it is preliminary. That may well make men's hearts chill within them.

But for you and me, if we have any love in our hearts and loyalty in our spirits to that King, "His coming" should be "prepared as the morning" and we should join in the great burst of rapture of many a psalm, which calls upon rocks and hills to break forth into singing, and trees of the field to clap their hands. His own parable tells us how we ought to regard His coming.

When the fig tree's branch begins to supple, and the little leaves to push their way through the polished stem, then we know that summer is at hand. His coming should be as the approach of that glorious, fervid time, in which the sunshine has ten-fold brilliancy and power. The time of ripened harvest and matured fruits, the time of joy for all creatures that love the sun, and the Son. It should be the glad hope of all His servants.

We have a double witness to bear in the midst of this as of every generation. One-half

of the witness stretches back to the cross and proclaims "Christ has come." The other reaches onward to the throne, and proclaims, "Christ will come again." Between those two high-lifted piers swings the chain of the world's history, which closes with His return to judge and to save, of the Lord who came to die and has gone to prepare a place for us. But we do not forget, let us not forget, that we may well take another point of view than this. Scripture know of many comings of the Lord preliminary to, and in principle, one with His last coming.

For nations all great crises of their history are "comings of the Lord," the Judge, and we are strictly in the line of Scripture analogy when in reference to individuals, we see in each single death a true coming of the Lord.

That is the point of view in which we ought to look upon a Christian's death bed. "The Master is come and calleth for thee." Each death is a departure and a coming of the Lord for His own. **Beyond all secondary causes, deeper than disease or accident, lies the loving will of Him who is the Lord of life and the Lord of death. Death is Christ's minister, mighty and beauteous, though his face be dark.** And he too stands amidst the ranks of the "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation." We have guardian angels, He is our Guardian Angel, the Angel of the Lord.

It is Christ that said of one, "I will that this man tarry." And to another, "Go, and he goeth." **But whensoever a Christian lies down to die, Christ says, "Come,"** and he comes. And how that thought should hallow the death chamber as with the print of the Master's feet. How it should quiet our souls and dry our tears. How it should change the whole aspect of that, "shadow feared of man." With Him for our companion, the lonely road will not be dreary, and though in its anticipation, our timid souls may often be ready to say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me." If we have Him by our sides, then "even the night shall be light about us."

The dying martyr beneath the city wall lifted up his face to the Heaven and said,

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” It was the echo of the Lord’s promise, “I will come again, and receive you to Myself.”

Notice finally the principle of the perfected union. The departure for such a purpose necessarily involved the return again. Both are stages in the process, which is perfected by complete union. “That where I am there ye may be also.” Christ as I have been saying is in Heaven. His presence is all that we need for peace, for joy, for purity, for rest, for love, for growth. To be “with Him” as He tells us in another part of these wonderful last words in the upper chamber, is to “behold His glory.” **And to behold His glory, as John tells us in his epistle, is to be like Him.**

So Christ’s presence means the communication to us of all the luster of His radiance, of all the whiteness of His purity, of all the depth of His blessedness, and of a share in His wondrous dominion. His glorified manhood will pass into ours, and they that are with Him will pass where He is and will rest in the center and home of their spirits and find Him all sufficient.

His presence is my heaven. Wherever Christ is, there is heaven. That is almost all we know. It is more than all we need to know.

The curtain is the picture. But it is what is there transcends in glory all or present experience that Scripture can only hint at it and describes it by negations, such as “no night,” “no sorrow,” “no tears,” “no pain,” “no death,” “former things are passed away,” and by some symbols of glory and luster gathered from all that is loftiest and noblest in human buildings and society. But all these things are but secondary and poor. The living heart of the hope and the lambent center of the brightness is “so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

And it is enough. It is enough to make the bond of union between us in the outer court, and them in the Holy Place. Parted friends will fix to look at the same star at the same moment of the night and feel some union, and if we from amidst the clouds of Earth and they from amidst the pure radiance of their Heaven, turn our eyes to the same Christ, we are not far apart. If He be the Companion of

each of us, He reaches a hand to each, and clasping it, the parted ones are united. And **“whether we wake or sleep, we live ‘together,’ because we both live with Him.”**

If we are occupied with Christ on Earth, they are continually occupied with Christ in Heaven. There is union whether asleep or awake. Is Jesus Christ so much to you that a Heaven which consists in nearness and likeness to Him has any attraction for you? Let Him be your Saviour, your Sacrifice, your Helper, your Companion. Obey Him as your King, love Him as your Friend, trust Him as your all. **And be sure that then the darkness will be but the shadow of His hand.** And instead of dreading death, as He didn’t, as that which you think may separate you from life and love and action and joy, you will be able to meet it peacefully, as that which rends the thin veil, and unites you with Him who is the Heaven of Heavens. Christ Himself is the Third Heaven.

He has gone to prepare a place for you. And if you will let Him, He will prepare us for the place, and then come and lead us home. “Thou will show me the path of life, which leads through death.” “In Thy presence is fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” Here we have the Lord’s departure and these are some of the expressions of His pre-departure moment, just a day before He departed. And these are the thoughts that will encourage you when you depart or when someone you love departs.

“You believe in God, believe also in Me.”

“In My Father’s house there are many mansions.”

“If it were not so, I would have told you so.”

“I go to prepare a place for you.”

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will return and receive you unto Myself.”

And that can be individually at your departure, or collectively as the body of Christ at the Rapture of the Church. He comes for us individually and collectively... each and all.

So far the Lord has spoken about:

- His departure

- and the purpose of His departure
- and the return from His departure
- the guarantee of His return because of His purpose

- and of the believer's eternal and perfect union with Him

Who is afraid to go home?

And with all this, He has not exhausted all His comfort. There is still more we need: What is it?

Part Four: The Way

A PREVIEW OF OUR DEPARTURE

“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” “Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?” “Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.” John 14:4-7.

Now the Lord had been speaking about His departure. And He had explained to them the purpose of His departure. And He spoke to them of His return, as guaranteed by that purpose. He told them that believers would have an eternal and perfect reunion with Him. But even these cheering and calming thoughts do not exhaust His consolation, as they did not satisfy all the disciple's needs. They might have said, “Yes we believe that you will come back again, and we believe that we shall be together again, **but what about the parenthesis of absence?**”

But what about the time until You come back? And here is the answer or at least part of it. “Whither I go ye know and the way ye know.” Or literally, “Whither I go ye know the way.” When you say to someone “you know the way,” you mean come. And in these words there lies, as it seems to me, a veiled invitation to the disciples to come to Him before He came back to them. And the assurance that they, though separated, might still find and tread the road to the Father's house and so be with Him still. In other words, they are not left desolate and neither are we. So the parenthesis is bridged across.

Now in these verses we have some large and important lesson as we follow the course of our context. **First: Observe the disciples unconscious knowledge.** Jesus Christ says, “Ye know the way and you know the goal.” Thomas ventures to contradict His omnis-

cience. And he traverses both of the Lord's assertions with a brisk and thorough going negative. “We do not know whither Thou goest.” says Thomas (OUK OIDA in the Greek). Since we don't know, “how can we know the way?” He is the same man in this conversation that we find him in the interview before our Lord's journey to raise Lazarus, and in the interview after our Lord's resurrection. In all three cases he appears as mainly under the dominion of sense, as slow to apprehend anything beyond its limits, as morbidly melancholy and disposed to take the blackest possible view of things, **a practical pessimist.** And yet with a certain frank outspokenness, which half redeems the other characteristics from blame.

He could not understand all the Lord's words, which He had just spoken. His mind was befogged and dimmed, and He blurts out his ignorance knowing that the best place to carry it is to the Illuminator who can make it light. “We know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?” Was Jesus Christ right when He said, “You know?” Or was Thomas right, right when he said, “We don't know?” The fact is that Thomas and all his fellows know, after a fashion, but they **did not know that they knew.** They had heard much in the past as to where Christ was going. Plainly enough it had been rung in their ears over and over again. It had some kind of lodgement in their minds, and, in that sense, they did know. **It is this unused and unconscious knowledge of theirs to which Christ appeals.** And He tries to draw out into consciousness and power when He says, “You know whither I am going, and you know the road.”

Now, isn't that what a patient teacher does with a flustered student, and says to them, “Take time. You know it well enough if

you will only think.” so the Lord here says, “Do not be agitated and troubled in your heart, mind. Let not your hearts be troubled.” Reflect, remember, overhaul your stores and think what I have told you over and over again, **and you will find that you do know whither I am going, and that you do know the way.**

The patient gentleness of the Lord with the slowness of the scholars is beautifully exemplified here, as is also the method, which He lovingly and patiently adopts, of sending men back to consult their own consciousness as illuminated by His teaching, and to see whether there is not lying somewhere, unwrecked of an unemployed in some dusty corner of their minds, a truth, that only needs to be dragged out and cleansed in order to show itself for what it is, the all sufficient light and strength for the moment’s need.

The dialogue is an instance of what is true about us all, that we have in our possession truths given to us by Jesus Christ, the whole sweep and bearing of which, the whole majesty and power and illuminating capacity of which we do not dream of yet. How much in our creeds lies dim and undeveloped? Time and circumstances and some sore agony of spirit are needed in order to make us realize the riches that we possess. And the certitudes to which our troubled spirits may cling, and the practice of far more patient, honest, profound meditation, and reflection than finds favor with the average Christian man is needed. Too, in order that the truths possessed may be possessed, and that we may know what we know, and understand “the things that are given to us of God.”

In all our creeds there are large tracts that we, in some kind of fashion, do believe, and yet they have no vitality in our consciousness nor power in our lives. And the Lord does here with these disciples exactly what He is trying to do day by day with us, namely, to fling us back on ourselves, or rather back on His revelation to us, and get us to fathom its depths and to walk round about its magnitudes and so understand the things that we say we believe.

All our knowledge is ignorance. Ignorance that confesses itself to the Lord is the way of becoming knowledgeable. His light will touch the smoke and change it into red spires of flame. If you do not know go to Him and say, “Lord, I do not.” An accurate understanding of where the darkness lies is the first step to the light. We are meant to carry all our inadequate and superficial realizations of His Truth into His presence, that from Him, we may gain deeper knowledge, a firmer faith, a more joyous confidence, and assurance, in His inexhaustible lessons.

In every article and item of the Christian faith there is a transcendent element which surpasses our present comprehension. Let us be confident that the light will break, and let us welcome the new illumination when it comes, more sure that it come from God.

Be not puffed up with the conceit that you know all. Be sure of this, that, according to the old, old metaphor, we are but as children on the shore of the great ocean, gathering a few of the shells that it has washed to our feet, itself stretching boundless, and, thank God, sunlit, before us.

“Ye know the way.” “Lord, we know not the way.”

Secondly: Observe here our Lord’s great self-revelation which meets this unconscious knowledge. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” Now it is quite plain, I think from the whole strain of the context and the purpose of these words that the main idea in them is the first: “I am the Way.” And that is made more certain because of the last words of the verse, which summing up the force of the three preceding assertions. Dwell only upon the metaphor of the Way.

“No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” So, that of these three great words, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we are to regard the second and the third as explanatory of the first. They are not co-ordinate, but the first is the more general, and the other two show how the first comes to be true.

“I am the way, because I am the Truth and the Life.” There are no words of the Lord,

perhaps to which our previous study are more necessary to be applied than these. We know, and yet, Oh, what an overplus of glory and of depth is here that we do not know and never can know.

The most fragmentary and inadequate grasp of them with soul and mind will bring light to the mind and quietness and peace to the soul, but the whole meaning of them goes beyond man and even angels.

What little we know of the Word, it is still powerful and has its effect on our lives. We can only skim the surface and seek to shift back the boundaries of our knowledge a little further, and to embrace within its limits a little more of the broad land into which the words brings us. So just take a thought or two which may tend in that direction. Note, then, as belonging to all three of these clauses, that remarkable "I am."

We show a way, Christ is it.

We speak the Truth, Christ is it.

Parents impart life which they have received, Christ is life.

He separates Himself from all men by that representation that He is not merely the Communicator or the Teacher or the Guide, but that He Himself is, in His own personal being, the Way, Truth and Life. He said that when Calvary was within arm's length. This was just before His departure. His last words, as it were. What did He think about Himself, and what should we think of Him?

And then note, further that He sets forth His unique relation to the Truth as being one ground on which He is the way to God. He is the Truth in reference to the Divine nature. That Truth, then, is not a mere matter of words. It is not only His speech that teaches us, but Himself that shows us God. His whole life and character, His personality, are the true representation within human conditions of the invisible God. And when He says, "I am the Way and the Truth." He is saying substantially the same thing as the great prologue of this gospel says when it calls Him the Word and the Light of men. And as Paul says when he names Him, "The image of the invisible

God." There is all the difference between talking about God and showing Him. We talk and teach about Him. Jesus Christ manifested Him.

Men reveal God by their words, voices. Christ reveals Him by Himself and the facts of His life. The truest and the highest representation of the Divine nature that men can ever have is in the face of Jesus Christ.

I need only to remind you in a sentence about other and lower applications of this great saying, which do not, as I think, enter into the purpose of the context. He is the Truth inasmuch as in the life and historical manifestation of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Scriptures. Men find foundation truths of a moral and spiritual sort.

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report." He is these, and all true ethics is but the formulating into principles of all the facts of the life and character of Jesus Christ.

Further our text says He is the way because He is the life. On the one side God is brought to all souls and in some real sense to our comprehension, by the life of Jesus Christ and so He is the Way.

But that is not enough. There must be an action upon us as well as an action having reference to the Divine nature. God is brought to men by the manifestation in Christ, and we, the dead, are quickened by the communication of the life. The one phrase points to all His work as a Revealer, the other points to all His work upon us as a Life Giver, a life-giving Spirit, a Quickener and an Inspirer. Dead men cannot walk a road. It is of no use to make a path men cannot walk that starts from a cemetery.

Christ taught that men apart from Him are dead, and that the only life that they can have which was in Himself, and of which He is the Source and the principle for the whole world.

He doest not yet tell us here what yet is true, and what He abundantly tells in other parts of this great conversation, that the only

way by which the life which He brings can be diffused and communicated is by His death. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” He is the Life, and paradox of mystery and yet a fact which is the very heart and center of His Gospel. His only way of giving His life to us is by giving up His life for us. He must die that He may be the Life-Spring for the world. The alabaster box must be broken if the ointment and its fragrance are to be poured out, **and death is the gate of life**, in a deeper than the ordinary sense of the saying, inasmuch as the death of the Life which is Christ is the life of the death which we are.

And so because on the one hand He brings a God to our souls, that we can love and trust, and because on the other hands, He communicates to our spirits, dead in the only true death which is the separation from God by sin, the life by which we are knit to God, He is the way to the Father.

And what about people that never heard of Him, to whom the Way has been closed, to whom that Truth has never been manifested? To whom the Life has never been brought? Christ has other ways of working that through His historical manifestation, for there is no Truth more plainly taught in this great fourth gospel than this, “That the Light lightheth every man that cometh into the world.” The eternal Word works through all the Earth, in ways beyond our ken, and wherever any man has, however imperfectly, felt after and grasped the thought of a Father in the Heavens, there the Word, which is the Light of men, has wrought.

But for us to whom this Book has come, for what people call in bitter irony, Christendom, the law of our text rigidly applies, and it is being worked out all round us today.

“No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” And here we are in America, and even in other continents of Europe and England, and we are all face to face I believe with this alternative, either Jesus Christ is the Revealer of God and the Life of men, or there is an empty Heaven.

And for you individually, it is either **take Christ for the Way**, or wander in the wilderness and forget your Father. It is either **take Christ for Truth**, or be given over to the insufficiencies of mere natural, political and intellectual truths, and the shows and illusions of time and sense. It is either **take Christ for your Life**, or remain in your deadness, separated from God.

Now lastly, we have here the disciple's **ignorance and the new vision which repels it.** “If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.” Our Lord accepts for the moment Thomas's standpoint. He supplements His former allegation of the disciples' knowledge with the admission of the ignorance which went with it as its shadow, and was only too sadly and plainly shown by their failure to discern in Him the manifestation of the Father.

He has just told them that they did know what they thought they knew not. He now tells them that they did not know what they thought they knew so well, after so many years of companionship, even Himself. The proof that they did not know is that they did not know the Father as revealed in Him, nor Him as revealing the Father.

If they missed that, they missed everything, and for all they had known of His graciousness, were strangers to His truest self. **Their ignorance would turnout knowledge, if they would think, and their supposed knowledge would turn out ignorance.** The lesson for us is that the true test of the completeness and worth of our knowledge of Christ lies in its being knowledge of God the Father, brought near to us by Him. This saying puts a finger on the radical deficiency of all merely humanitarian views of Christ's Person, however clearly they might and admirably extol the beauty of His character and the “sweet reasonableness” of His wisdom.

They all break down here, and are arraigned, as so shallow and incomplete that they do not deserve to be called knowledge of Him at all. If you know anything about Jesus Christ, rightly this is what you know about

Him, that in Him you see God. If you have not seen God in Him, you have not gotten to the heart of the mystery. The knowledge of Christ which stops with the Man and the Martyr, and the Teacher and the beautiful, gentle Brother, is knowledge so partial that even He cannot venture to all it other than ignorance.

Do our conceptions of Him meet this test which He Himself has laid down, before His departure, and can we say that, seeing Him, we see in Him God? And then our Lord passes on to another thought, the new vision which at the moment was being granted to this unconscious ignorance that was passing into conscious knowledge.

“From henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.” We must give that “henceforth, from henceforth” as a note of time, a somewhat liberal interpretation and apply it to the whole series of utterances and deeds of which the words of our text are but a portion. And if so, we come to this: It was in the wisdom and the gentleness, and the deep truths of that upper chamber before His departure, it was in the agony of the submission of Gethsemane, it was in the meek patience before the judges, and the silent acceptance of ignominy and shame, it was in the willing, loving endurance of the long hours upon the cross, that Christ inaugurated the new stage in His revelation of God and in His life giving to the world.

And it is “from henceforth,” and thereby that in the Man Jesus Christ men know and see the Father as they never did before. The cross and the passion of Christ are the unveiling to the world of the heart of God. And by the side of that new vision, the fairest, and the loftiest, and the sweetness of Christ’s former manifestations and utterances sink into comparative insignificance.

It is the departing, dying Christ that reveals the Living God. So here is our WAY to God. See that we seek the Father by Him alone. **He is your Truth.** Grapple Him to your hearts, and by patient meditation and continual faithfulness, enrich yourselves with all the communicated treasures that you have already received in Him. **He is your Life.** Cleave to Him, that the quick Spirit that was in Him may pass into you and make you victor over all death and departures, temporal and eternal.

Know Him as a Friend, not as a mere historical Person, or with mere intellect, for to know a Friend is something far deeper than to know a Truth. “Acquaint thyself with Him and be at peace.” “This is life eternal, to know (with the knowledge is life and possession) Thee, the only True God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”

Part Five: The True Vision of God

A PREVIEW OF OUR DEPARTURE

“Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hat seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works’ sake.” John 14:8-11.

The vehement burst with which Philip interrupts the calm flow of our Lord’s discourses in His departure is not the product of mere frivolity or curiosity. One hears the ring of earnestness in it, and the yearnings of many years find their voice. Philip had felt out of depths, no doubt, in the profound teachings which our Lord had been giving, but his last words about seeing God set a familiar chord vibrating. As an Old Testament believer, he knew that Moses had once led the elders of Israel up to the mount where “they saw the God of Israel.” And that to many others had been granted sensible manifestations of the Divine presence.

As a disciple, he longed for some similar sign to confirm his faith. As a man he was conscious of the deep need which all of us have, whether we are conscious of it or not, for something more real and tangible than an unseeable and unknowable God.

The peculiarities of Philip’s temperament strengthened the desire. The first appearance that he makes in the gospels is characteristically like this his last. To all Nathanael’s objections he had only the reply “Come and see.” **And here he says if we could see the Father it would be enough.** He was one of the men to whom seeing is believing, and so he

speaks. **Philip’s petition is childlike in its simplicity, beautiful in its trust, noble and true in its estimate of what men need.** Is seeing believing?

“Show us the Father,” that is what we need. **He longs to see God.** This is a God-consciousness principle. **He believes that Christ can show Him God.** This is a Gospel-hearing principle. **He is sure that the sight of God will satisfy his heart.** Theses are errors, or truths, according to what is meant by “seeing.”

Philip meant a palpable manifestation, and so far he was wrong. Give the word its highest and its truest meaning, and Philip’s error becomes a great Truth.

Our Lord lovingly, graciously, gently and with a hint of rebuke answers the request, and seeks to disengage the error from the Truth. His answer lies in the verses that we have here before us. Let us try to follow them, and, as we may, to skim their surface, for their depths are truly beyond us.

First of all, we have the sight of God in Christ is enough to answer man’s longings. “Show us God.” There is a world of sadness and tenderness, of suppressed pain and of grieved affection, in the first words of our Lord’s reply. “Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?” He seldom names His disciples. When He does, it is a deep cadence of affection in the designation.

This man was one of the first disciples, the little original band called by Christ Himself. And so had been with Him all the time of His ministry. The Lord wonders with a gentle wonder that, before his eyes that loved Him, as much as Philip’s did, His continual self-revelation had been to so little purpose.

In the answer, in its first portion there lies the reiteration of the thought we studied be-

fore, "that the sight of Christ is the sight of God." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And that not to know Christ as thus showing God is not to know Him at all. "Thou hast known Me, Philip."

Further there is a thought that the sight of God in Christ is sufficient. "How sayest thou show us the Father?" From all this we may gather some thoughts on which we can touch now briefly.

First, that we all do need to have God made visible to us. The history of heathendom shows us that. In every land men have said, "the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men." And the highest cultivation of this highly cultivated and self-conscious 20th century has not removed us from the same necessity that the rudest savage has, to have some kind of manifestation of the Divine nature other than the dim, vague ones which are possible apart from the revelation of God in Christ.

The God who is only the product of inferences from creation, or providence or the mysteries of history, or the wonders of my own inner life, the creatures of logic or of reflection, is very powerless to sway and influence man. The limitations of our faculties and the boundlessness of our souls both cry out for a God who is nearer to us than that, and whom we can see and love and be sure of.

The whole world wants the making visible of Divinity as its deepest want. Your soul and mind require it. Nothing else will ever stay our hunger, will ever answer our questioning minds. We all come to the point of God consciousness. Christ meets this need.

How can you make wisdom visible? How can a man see love or purity? How do I see your spirit? By the deeds of your body. And the only way by which God can ever come near enough to men to be a constant power and a constant motive in their lives is by their seeing Him at work in a Man, who amongst them is His image and revelation. Christ's whole life is the making visible of the invisible God. He is the manifestation to the world of the unseen Father.

The vision is enough, enough for the mind, enough for the soul, enough for the will. There is none else that is sufficient, but this is, "How sayest thou, shew us the Father?"

If we see God it suffices us. Then the mind can settle down upon the thought of Him as the basis of all being, and of all change, and the soul can twine itself round Him and the seeking soul folds its wings and is at rest, and the troubled spirit is quiet, and the accusing conscience is silent, and the rebellious will is subdued, and the stormy passions are quieted, and in the inner kingdom is a great peace.

The sight of God in Christ brings rest to every soul, and the absence of the vision is the true secret of all disquiet. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." We are troubled and anxious and tossed from one stormy billow to another and swept ever by all the winds that blow, because we see not God our Father in the face of Jesus Christ.

"Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." This is either a pure petition or the deepest and noblest prayer of the human heart. Blessed are they who have learned what it is to see, and know where that great sight is to be seen. "Show us the Father."

Our present knowledge and vision are far higher than the mere external symbol of God which this man wanted. The elders of Israel saw the God of Israel, but what they saw was but some symbolical manifestation of that which in itself is unseen and unattainable. But we who see God in Christ, we see no symbol but the reality. And there is nothing more possible or to be hoped for here.

Our present manifestation and sight of God in Christ does fall, in some way unknown to us, beneath the bright hopes that we are entitled to cherish. But howsoever imperfect it may be, as measured against the perfection of the vision when we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known, it is enough. And more than enough for all the questionings, and desires of our hungering spirits.

Secondly, our Lord goes on to a further answer, and points to the Divine and mutual indwelling by which this sight is made possible. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" And that is where we started, as it were, in our study of the Lord's departure and a preview of our departure, when He said, "You believe in God, believe also in Me."

He went on here to say, "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." There are here mainly two things, Christ's claim to the oneness of unbroken communion, and Christ's claim, consequently, to the oneness of complete co-operation. "I am in the Father." indicates the suppression of all independent and therefore rebellious will, consciousness, thought and action. "And the Father in Me." indicates the influx into that perfectly filial manhood of the whole fullness of God in unbroken, continuous, gentle, deep flow.

These two are the two sides of this great mystery on which neither wisdom nor reverence lead us to dilate, and they combine to express the closest and most uninterrupted blending, interpretation, and communion. And then follows the other claim, that because of this continuous mutual indwelling there is perfect co-operation.

This is also stated in terms corresponding to the preceding double representation. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself." correspond to "I am in the Father." "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." corresponding to "The Father in Me." The two put together teach us this, that by reason of that mysterious and ineffable union of communion, Jesus Christ in all His words and in all His works is the perfect Instrument of the Divine will, so that His Words are God's Words, and His Works are God's works. So that when He speaks His gentle wisdom, His loving compassion, His prophetic threatenings, are the speech of God, and that when He acts, whether it be by miracle or in the ordinary deeds of His life, what we see is God working before our eyes as we never see Him in any human being.

"I do always the will of God and those things which pleaseth Him." From all this follows a couple of considerations which we can suggest. Note the absolute absence of any consciousness on Christ's part of the smallest deflection or disharmony between Himself and the Father. Two triangles laid on each other are in very line, point, and angle absolutely coincident. That humanity is capable of receiving the whole inflow of God and that indwelling God is perfectly expressed in the humanity.

There is no trace of consciousness of sin. Everything that He did He knew to be God's acting. There are no barriers between the Two. Jesus Christ was conscious of no separation, not the thinnest film of air between these two who adhered and inhered so closely and so continuously. It is an awful assertion.

Now, I ask you to ask yourself a question. If this was what Jesus Christ said, what did He think of Himself? And is this a Man, like the rest of us, with blotches and sin, with failures to employ His own ideas, and still more to carry out in life the will that He knows to be God's will? Is this a Man like other men who thus speaks to us? If Jesus Christ has this consciousness, either He was ludicrously, tragically, blasphemously, utterly mistaken and untruthworthy, or He is what the Church in all ages has confessed Him to be, "The everlasting Son of the Father."

Lastly, the Lord further sets before us the faith to which He invites us on the ground of His union with, and revelation of God. "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very works sake." Observe that the verb at the beginning of this last verse of our text passes into a plural form. Our Lord has done with Philip especially, and speaks now to all who will hear Him, and to us among the rest of His auditors.

He bids us to believe Him. And to believe something about Him, on the strength of His own testimony. Or, as it were, second best, believe Him on the testimony of His works. We have a couple of gracious principles here in this statement of the Lord's. The

true bond of union between men and Jesus Christ is faith. We have to trust, and that is better than sight. **We have to trust Him. He is the personal Object of our faith.**

In all faith there is what we may call a moral and a voluntary element. A man believes a proposition because it is forced upon Him and His intelligence is obliged to accept it. A man trusts Christ because **he will** trust Him. And the moral and the voluntary element carries us far beyond the mere intellectual conception of faith as the assent to a set of theological propositions. Faith really is the out-going of the whole man, will, mind, and all, to a person whom it holds.

But the Christ that you and I have to trust is the Christ as He himself has declared Himself to be to us. “Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.” There is a bastard, mutilated kind of thing that calls itself Christian faith, that goes about the world in this generation which believes in Jesus Christ in all sort of beautiful ways, but it will not believe in Him as the personal revelation and making visible of the unseen God.

Jesus Christ Himself tells us here that that is not the kind of faith which He invites us to put forth. If we put forth that only, we have not yet come to understand Him. Christ as here declared to us by Himself is the only Christ, to whom it is right to give our trust. If He be not God manifest in the flesh, I ought not to trust Him. I may admire Him as a historical personage, I may reverence Him for His wisdom and beauty, I may even in some vague way have a kind of love for Him, but what in the name of common sense shall I trust Him for? And why should He call upon us to exercise faith in Him unless He stands before me as the adequate Object of man's trust, namely the manifest God?

And further, note the believing in the sense of trusting is seeing and knowing. Philip said, “Show us the Father.” Christ answers and says, “Believe and you will see.” If you look back upon the previous verses of this chapter, you will find that in the earlier portion of them they key word is “know,” and that in the second portion the key word is

“see,” and in this portion the key word is “believe.” The world says “seeing is believing.” **The Word of God says “believing is seeing.”** “Faith is the evidence of things not seen.” the true way to knowledge, and to a better vision than the uncertain vision of the eye is faith.

In confidence and in directness, the knowledge of God that we have through faith in the Christ whom our eyes have never seen is far ahead of the confidence and the directness that attach to our mere bodily sight, and so the key to all Divine knowledge, and the sure road to the truest vision of God is faith.

Further, faith, even if based upon lower than the highest grounds, is still faith, and acceptable to Him. “Or else believe Me for the very works sake.” The works are mainly the miracles but not exclusively. And we are here taught, that, if a man has not come to the point of spiritual susceptibility in which the image of Jesus Christ lays hold upon his soul and obliges Him to trust Him, and to love Him, there are yet the miracles to look at, and the faith that grasps them, and by help of that ladder, climbs to Him. Though it is second best, is yet real.

The evidence of miracles is subordinate, and yet it is valid and true. To focus our attention on Him and His Word, miracles themselves never ever saved one soul. John the baptist performed no miracles.

So, our Lord contradicts both the exaggerations of past generations and the exaggerations of this, and neither asserts that the great reason for faith is miracles, nor that miracles are of no use at all.

Former centuries in the Christian Church reiterated the former exaggeration and thus partly provoked the exaggeration of this day. Let us keep the middle course. There is a better way of coming to Christ than through the gate of miracles, and that is that He should stamp His own Divine GRACE and elevation upon our minds and our souls. But if we have not reached that point, do not let us kick away the ladder, “the calling cards,” that may help us to it.

“Believe Him for the works' sake.” Believe Him. Imperfect faith may be the high-

way to perfection. Let us follow the light, it if be but a far off glimmer, sure that it will bring us into noontide day if we are faithful to its leading. On the other hand, let us remember that no fail avails itself of all the treasures laid up for it, which does not day hold upon Christ in the character in which He presents Himself. The only adequate, worthy trust in Him is the trust which grasps Him as the incarnate God and Saviour. Only such a faith does justice to His own claim. Only such a faith is the sure path to vision and to knowledge. Only such a faith draws down the blessing of a questioning intellect answered. A hungry heart satisfied, a conscience, accusing and prophetic of a judgment to come, cleanses and purified.

To each of us Christ addresses Himself with His gracious invitation. "Believe in Me, that I am in the Father. And the Father is in Me." May we all answer "We believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." These departing words of Jesus Christ, a day before His departure, are all a part of our heritage, and these departing words will comfort you on the departure of your loved ones, or your very own departure.

1. Faith in God and faith in Christ.

"Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me."

2. Many mansions.

"In My Father's house there are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you."

3. The Forerunner.

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come

again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

4. The Way.

"And wither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto Him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him."

5. The true vision of God.

"Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake."

And He departed. He died and we depart!

Buddy Dano, Pastor
Divine Viewpoint Bible Studies
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