

Gathering to the Center

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that while many come to Christ from every quarter, true discipleship requires a genuine, heartfelt coming to Jesus beyond mere outward profession or superficial interest.

Scripture: Mark 1:45, John 12:32, Matthew 13:47-50, Matthew 22:14, Luke 8:13-14, 1 Corinthians 11:19, 2 Corinthians 13:5

Topics: "Discipleship", "Faith", "Gospel Invitation"

Description

In 'Gathering to the Center,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the dynamic reality that people come to Christ from every corner of society, yet not all come with true faith. He challenges believers and ministers alike to discern genuine discipleship from superficial profession, emphasizing the necessity of heartfelt faith and the power of Christ's saving work. Spurgeon's timeless message encourages perseverance in ministry and invites listeners to examine their own spiritual journey toward Christ.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"They came to Him from every quarter." Mark 1:45.

THE fact as it stands is well worthy of our notice and offers considerable encouragement to us. The multitudes came to hear our Lord and to see His miracles. He could not be hidden—wherever He appeared a congregation soon assembled. Indeed, the crowds became too large and too pressing, "insomuch that they trod one upon another." Few preachers suffer from our Lord's difficulty, but it was a frequent necessity with Him to use means to diminish the crowds and, therefore, He repaired to desert places, or took boats and crossed the sea. I gather from this, dear Friends, that notwithstanding the holiness of our Lord's doctrine and the way in which it runs counter to the desires of the carnal heart. Notwithstanding the plainness of His rebukes and the way in which He lays pride in the dust, there is a remarkable attractiveness to all kinds of men in the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

If we would find a topic calculated to interest the masses, we need not go abroad for novelties—the old, old Gospel will best collect the eager anxious throng. Other things being equal, you shall find that more men will be drawn together to hear of Christ than to listen to any other topic. And this will continue year after year while other subjects have lost what temporary interest they once possessed. Give a man any other theme you please and let him expound upon it three or four times a week in the same place, to the

same audience, and it will not be long before his hearers will be weary and he, himself, will be worn out.

I do not believe it would be possible to retain, year after year, a mass of attentive hearers, and send them away longing for more, with any theme except Jesus Christ and Him crucified! If you bring Jesus forth, the people will continue to come to Him from every quarter, for the prophecy of Jacob is still true, "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." The attraction in the instance before us was not only Jesus preaching, but Jesus displaying His healing power. The works which He did bore witness of Him until the people asked, "What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey Him." The news of lame men leaping and lepers cleansed brought the people together. Even thus, let but Jesus be in any congregation manifesting His saving work—Jesus breaking hard hearts, Jesus binding up broken spirits, Jesus reclaiming the outcasts, Jesus gathering the lambs in His bosom, Jesus in action—then be sure of this, the people will come together till you will have to cry "Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?"

The best advertisement for Jesus is the personal testimony of every soul whom He has blessed! To blaze abroad His fame you need hire no hack writers or mercenary tongues—they shall speak best of Him who tell about the things which they have done touching the king, whose tongues are as the pens of ready writers because their hearts dictate the matter. They have experienced His power and, therefore, they cannot but speak what they have seen and felt! Jesus Christ, healing and spoken of by those whom He had healed, drew multitudes to Himself in the olden times. And I gather from this the expectation that if any of us will preach Christ in Christ's way, accompanied by Christ's power in the healing of men, we shall, even in desert places, see the people coming together! And all the more so because He has been lifted up upon the Cross and, therefore, will draw all men unto Him.

But, dear Friends, there was an inner circle. The mere hearers did but come to Him in the lowest sense. I do not think Jesus Christ set much store by drawing multitudes around Him to listen to His words or look upon His miracles. I am sure He did not, for He sought to avoid such popularity and, therefore, He forbade the leper to speak of his cure and He withdrew Himself to escape from the people. If He had considered that success was to be measured by the size of His audience, He would have remained where the crowds were assembled. But He formed a more accurate judgment and knew

that as the heap upon the threshing floor contains abundance of chaff, even so in the great gatherings of mere hearers, there are multitudes whose adherence is of little value.

Beloved, if men only come together to hear the Gospel, our work will end in dreary disappointment and the gatherings on the Sabbath will prove to be wretched wastes of time! But my text can be carried, as a matter of fact, very much further, for disciples came to Jesus from every quarter in a far better sense. He called, by His mysterious power, one and another who became His followers and they came to Him in the best sense. We read that He went into a mountain and called whom He would and they came to Him—this was a better coming. Of them it may be said, "They came to Him from every quarter."

It is very beautiful to see what a mixture Christ's disciples were. There were fishermen, but they were not all of that class, for there was among them a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews. There was a devout Nathanael, but there was also a publican to whose house salvation came. They were not all of the lower ranks, for among the holy women who ministered to him were some from Herod's court. And one who is called, "the beloved physician," followed Him as his Lord. They were not all of commendable characters, for a woman that was a sinner was His true disciple, but there were others against whom no

moral fault has ever been alleged. They came to Him drawn by His mysterious power from every portion of the land, from every condition and rank, from many phases of mind and types of character—"they came to Him from every quarter."

That is the matter of fact—I am now going to use the fact typically. I believe that as it was literally true that men came to hear our Lord and others came to believe on Him from every quarter, so it still is—and unto the Lord Jesus Christ men and women, in the preaching of the Gospel, are still coming from every quarter.

I. I will begin with the exterior ring again. OF THE OPEN OR PROFESSIONAL COMING TO CHRIST it may be said with a great deal of sorrow, "They came to Him from every quarter." The Gospel, when it is preached, draws many to itself who are not saved by it. The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net which men cast into the sea and it gathers fish of every kind. There is a day coming in which they will put the good into vessels and cast the bad away, but throughout this dispensation there will be every kind in the net. Tares will grow with the wheat and fruitless branches will be in the vine.

Men come to Christ by the avowal of Christianity, by the appropriation of its ordinances and the subscribing of its creed—and in this sense they still come to Him from every quarter. You must not imagine that in this Church all who have come to Christ nominally have really come. Do not indulge such a delusion, for if you do, you will certainly be deceived! You may belong, my dear Brothers and Sisters, to some little Bethel or select Ebenezer, but do not indulge the hope that all who professedly come to Christ, even there, though they are all so admirably sound and orthodox, have, all of them, really come to Jesus, for even there a mixture will be found. "Many are called and few are chosen." You shall take any 12 you will, but you cannot be sure but what one of them is a devil, for among the 12 selected by the Master, Judas Iscariot was found. They come to Christ from every quarter—from the land of hypocrisy and formality as well as from the country of sincerity.

Many came to Christ in His day and followed Him from the lowest of motives. Loaves and fishes were good bait, then, and they still are. We have not many of these attractions in this Church, but in certain quarters there are large loaves of very choice bread, exceedingly well buttered. And there are fishes, too, of the best kind—great fishes well cured, whose savory smell is dear to many. A taste for the Church loaves and fishes is pretty common, still, so that many come to the Church and, nominally to Christ, from the quarter of the land called selfishness. And so they make a gain of godliness. Some came to our Lord merely to receive benefits to their bodies—they brought a blind eye to be healed, or a withered arm to be restored—but they obtained no spiritual gifts. Thus do many derive benefit from the religion of Jesus of a moral and mental kind, but they miss the nobler gifts of the spiritual life.

No doubt many are charmed by Christian society, by the comforts of religious worship and by the degree of respectability which arises out of a profession—but they are not saved souls. We must not wonder when the loaves grow small and are only made of barley. And the fishes decrease in number if the mere hangers-on show us their true quality and disappear. He who comes to Christ for what he can get of worldly goods will leave Him when poverty and shame lie in the way. A number came to Christ out of admiration of His eloquence, for He spoke as never man spoke, and it is no wonder

that a woman of the multitude exclaimed in admiration, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the paps that gave You

suck!"

How true, however, was our Lord's reply, "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." He turned her mind to something better than admiration, namely, believing reception! But with such a Speaker and with such gracious matter it was no marvel that among His followers were found admirers of the Speaker as well as believers in the Savior. We must not wonder if we still find that some profess to come to Christ because He is eloquently set forth by His ministers, or because the poetical beauties of the Bible and the natural charms of religion win their tastes and hold them with their spell. But it is a poor coming which arises from this and nothing more!

A large number came to our Lord like the region of transient enthusiasm. "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go," said one, but he failed to do so. There were stony-ground hearers in those days whose blade of promise, because it had no depth of earth, sprang up very speedily, but as speedily withered away. Do not be astonished, Brothers and Sisters, if the stony-ground hearers perplex and disappoint us! They still come to Jesus from Pliable's country and come only to go back to their own place. There were those who came to Jesus Christ through misunderstanding His Character. If they had known Him better, they would not have followed Him as far as they did. And they proved this, for when they discovered more, they went back and walked no more with Him.

When He began to unveil certain parts of the Truth of God concerning Himself which had been hidden before, they said, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" When His Cross became more apparent and their vision of an earthly kingdom grew more and more dim, they proved that they had followed Him under an error, for they went their way. And no doubt many, today, profess the name of Jesus who are not aware what discipleship really involves. They do not know Him nor His Cross, nor the Truths of God He came to teach, and we may expect to see these go back when fuller discoveries shall startle them. They came to Him from every quarter.

Brother minister, friend working in the Sunday school, laborer for Christ in any low district—you may fairly expect that the people will come to Christ—but do not expect that they will all come from the land of honesty and truth! Do not count all fish that come to the net, or it may happen that your sure disappointment will dampen your zeal and diminish your confidence in the Gospel. Expect to take good fish in your net, but reckon upon finding the dog fish there, too, breaking your lines and attacking your other fish. Out of the best haul a fisherman ever makes there is something to throw away. When you sow good seed, look for wheat to spring up, but be not surprised if tares spring up, also! Just now the sun and the showers are making the corn grow fast, but the weeds are growing, too. It must be so.

Those influences which cause the good to be more lively appear to awake the energies of the Evil One. Whenever the devil is asleep, the Church is asleep, but whenever the Church wakes, the devil wakes, too. Every worker for Christ may reckon on mixed results—and when they come he must not despair as though some strange thing happened to him. Yet let us be thankful that many came to Jesus from the land of sincerity, men convinced that He was the Christ, men like the disciple to whom He said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you." Some, in coming, gave Him their whole hearts and from then on sat at His feet and received His words.

Some of the best were with Him, though there were some of the worst. Grateful hands were there which could break an alabaster box and pour it out for His sake, as well as cruel hands which could clutch the blood-stained pieces of silver—the price of His betrayal. I leave that point when I have asked you from what quarter you came. Are you true men, or spies? Do you come from the assemblies of deceit, or from the abodes of sincerity? Search and look! "Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith. Prove your

own selves. Know you not, your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, except you are reprobate?" I pray God this none of us may be found reprobate in that day!

II. Secondly, we will advance to something nearer and better. OF THE FIRST REAL SPIRITUAL COMING TO CHRIST BY FAITH it may be said, in the words of the text, "They came to Him from every quarter." Let me here employ an illustration. Seeking rest and health last week, I seated myself, for a little while, near a very rustic church which stands empowered in the woods. As I sat there I moralized upon the various paths which led up to the church porch. Each trail through the grass came from a different quarter, but they all led to one point. As I stood there, this reflection crossed me—even thus, men come to Christ from all quarters of the compass—and if, indeed, saved, they all come to

Him.

There is a path yonder which rises from a little valley. The little church stands on the hillside. There is a brook at the bottom and worshippers who come from the public road must cross a rustic bridge and then ascend the hill. Such comers rise at every step they take. Many burdened ones come to Christ from the deep places of self-abasement—they know their sinfulness and feel it—their self-consciousness has almost driven them to despair! They are down very low and every step they take to Christ is a step upwards. They have a little hope as they look to Him and then a little more, till it comes to a humble trust. Then from a feeble, trembling trust, it rises to a simple faith and so they advance, till, when they stand near to Jesus they reach to the full assurance of faith. Thus from soul distress and self-despair they come to the Lord Jesus and He receives them graciously.

Through the churchyard there was another path and it ran uphill from where I stood and, therefore, everyone who came that way descended to the Church door. These may represent the people who think much of themselves. They have been brought up in morality and lived in respectability in the town of Legality. They have never turned aside to the grosser vices and are among the models of behavior. Every step these good people take towards Christ is downward—they think less of themselves and still less until regret leads to repentance, repentance to bitter grief—and grief leads to self-abhorrence. So they come down to the level where Jesus meets with sinners, by admitting they are nothing and that Christ is all.

The two paths which I have mentioned were supplemented by a third which led through a thick and tangled forest—a narrow way wound between the oak trees and the dense underbrush. And I noticed that it led over a boggy place through which stepping stones had been carefully placed for the traveler, that he might not sink in the mire. Many a seeker has found his way to Jesus by a similar path. Dark with ignorance and thorny with evil questions, the path winds and twists about and leads through the Slough of Despond where a man had better pick his steps very carefully or he may sink in despair. Those whom Divine Grace leads, arrive at rest in Christ, but it is through the woods and through the slough.

Once more, I recognized another path which came in from the farmer's fields—through lands where the plow and the sickle are busy, each in its season—so that those who come from that quarter to worship come across the place of toil and may fitly represent those who are full of earnestness and effort and have as much need of Jesus as any. They do not know, yet, the way of salvation, but they follow after righteousness by the Law and strive to enter in at the strait gate in their own strength. But if they ever come to Christ, they will have to leave those fields and the plow and sickle of their own strength—and submit to receive Jesus as their All in All.

Now, do not suppose that the trails which I have mentioned are the only ones. There is only one Christ, but many are the quarters from which men come to Him. It would be impossible to describe all the ways by which men come to Christ and all the quarters from which they come. To our first believing we are all led by the Spirit of God, but very singular are the experiences of God's people and, perhaps, each man has a road peculiar to himself. We do not know all the ways by which souls arrive at Christ, but there is this mercy—He knows the ways by which His redeemed are coming to Him and He knows where they are.

I remember being at Wootton-Under-Edge, in Mr. Hills' garden, and being informed that on the Sabbath morning the quaint old gentleman would go into his garden and watch the people coming to the Meeting House. He would sit in his garden with his telescope, in the center of an amphitheatre of hills, and observe the country people coming down and look for any peculiar action. He then might mention it in his sermon, very much to the astonishment of the persons concerned! Our Lord Jesus, sitting in the center to which His redeemed are coming, sees them all, even when they are yet a great way off. If we can conceive a soul millions of miles off from Him, as far off as a comet is gone from the sun when it wanders to its utmost tether, yet our Lord Jesus Christ knows where the wanderer comes from and notes the time when the turning begins and the hour when the face is set towards Himself!

He can spy out Grace in a man's heart long before the man, himself, is conscious of it, and long before the most hopeful minister in the world could see a trace of Divine life in the soul. What a mercy this is! They come to Him from every quarter and He knows where they come from and how far they are on the road! Let us pray for all who are coming to Christ, as well as for those who have actually laid hold upon Him—"Lord Jesus, we pray You help those who are coming Your way. Draw them till they come nearer. Far away as they are, yet make them near." We do not always know when

men are coming, but when we perceive some little desire in that direction, let us imitate the great Father in the parable and run to meet them and see if we can help them on the journey.

Perhaps they need another stepping stone to be placed for them and we may drop one where their feet can reach it, or like Help, in "Pilgrim's Progress" we may help them out from the slough into which they have slipped. Do this for Christ's sake! Remember that of all who come to Christ from every quarter, never one was disappointed with Him yet. They come from various regions, drawn by the hope that Jesus will supply their needs—and He does supply them. All sorts of people who come to Christ, believingly, find in Him all that is needed to meet their peculiar cases. Sweet, also, is the thought that He never casts out a sinner, come from where he may. They arrive from different quarters, but He has no prejudice against Galilee or Judea, or Tyre or Sidon—He receives all comers!

The elder in the Book of Revelation asked a deeply interesting question, "From where did they come?" and, blessed be God, it is one which will never be answered to the prejudice of anyone who draws near to Jesus by faith! O Sinners, you may come from the thieves' kitchen, or from the convicts' cell! You are as welcome to Jesus as those who come from homes of virtue. You may come from the seat of the scorner. You may come from the bench of the drunk and if you come you shall receive a hearty welcome! You, too, O hopeful ones, may come from the home of piety and from the school of truth—and when you come, you will find the gates set wide open to receive you!

Come from the tents of Jacob, or from the tents of Kedar. Come from the holy mountain or from the lonely wilderness and you shall, all alike, find that He will in no way cast you out! It is a very pleasant reflection to us that when needy souls draw near to Jesus they cause Him no sorrow, but rather bring Him joy. All His

redeeming work is done. He has only to receive the recompense due to Him. They come, says one, with the burden of their sins and lay them upon Him. I answer, this is only true in a certain sense and must not be misunderstood. It is a great joy to think that no burden can come on our Lord's shoulders, now—no man can lay sin upon Christ anymore—it was laid on Him by the Father long ago. And, since He has made full atonement for it, not a particle of it remains!

Each redeemed one has cost Christ His life, already, and therefore, as each one actually comes, He costs Him nothing! On the contrary, He sees in each one the recompense for the travail of His soul. If we saw sinners coming by thousands to Christ and knew that He would have to bear the chastisement of their peace and be bruised, again, for their iniquities, we might well be sorrowful! But it is not so—He has finished the atoning work! Agony and pain are all over and now, as the redeemed come to Him, they gladden His heart! They increase His praise, they reward His pains. Oh that they would come in troops, like the flocks of Carmel for number! I may say in rustic language, "the more the merrier!" Let them gather from every quarter, each one bringing with him a crown of love for the Redeemer's brow!

Brothers and Sisters, there is no fear that the multitudes will cease to come from every quarter. The Greek word might be rendered, "They kept on coming to Him from every quarter." Even thus it is now. They are coming, they always will be coming, there will never be a time when they will not come! In the prophetic words of the 22nd Psalm, we are told that, "they shall come." We fall into a dull state at times and but few are converted, yet the Lord revives us by His Spirit and thousands are saved! We had notable evangelists among us preaching the Gospel and some persons imagined that when they were gone we should see no more of the work, but it is not so, sinners are still coming to Jesus and they will come.

The question for each one of my hearers is this—Am I coming, or have I come to Jesus? They came from every quarter—have I come? You strangers from beyond the sea. You good people from the country, are you coming to Jesus? You Londoners who regularly hear the Gospel in this house, are you coming? You who only occasionally listen to it, are you coming to Jesus? God grant that it may be said this morning of this mixed assembly, "They came to Jesus from every quarter!"

III. Thirdly, since coming to Christ is not a matter of once in your life and the Scripture says plainly, "Unto whom coming," to show us that the Christian is always coming to Christ, we will, therefore, follow out our point in reference

to THE DAILY COMINGS OF SAVED SOULS TO JESUS. Here, too, they come to Him from every quarter. Let us

think a minute. This morning the desire of every renewed soul here has been to come to Christ—and I hope that desire has been fulfilled to us all. If so, we have come to Him from every quarter! You who are very poor have forgotten your poverty this morning and found exceedingly great riches in Him. And, on the other hand, I trust that you who are wealthy have forgotten your worldly treasures and rejoiced to be only rich in Him.

If you have had a trying week, a perplexing week, a week of losses and crosses, you have, nevertheless, approached Him from that quarter and found Him a sure solace for your cares. Another has had a week of prosperity and success, but you, too, have not been content till you could leave the best things of earth to embrace the Lord from Heaven. From all points of experience you have come. Among the number of God's people here, this morning, who have had communion with Christ, what a variety of outward circumstances would be found in the quarters from which they have come! Men and women come to our

Lord from every quarter as to mental pursuits. The great student, the critic, the profound mathematician, the acute philosopher—all these, when taught of the Holy Spirit, delight to come to Jesus for rest!

I am sure I speak their mind when I say it is a great relief on Sunday to have done with puzzling problems and feed upon the simplicities of Jesus. I have heard say that men of great minds, when they come to hear a sermon, if they detect an attempt at something very fine on the part of the preacher and meet with displays of mere intellect, they turn away disappointed and say, "We have had enough of this all week." The Sabbath is a day of rest and that minister breaks the Sabbath in spirit who leads the people into the bondage of human wisdom instead of setting before them the Lord Jesus in whom, alone, they can find rest for their souls.

There are a few, blessed be God, who come to Jesus from the quarter of human culture and are delighted to come! These find more in Jesus Christ simply preached than the most capacious mind can take in. Blessed be God, thousands who are not philosophers or mathematicians are doing the same! Their thoughts are not very deep or penetrating, but they come to Christ in deed and of a truth and receive Him gladly. It is astonishing what a great deal of Christ some very ignorant people can take in! Converse with a godly old shepherd—the man may scarcely know his letters—but listen how he speaks of Divine things!

Go and sit with a poor Christian woman in her cottage who never went beyond the village, and never will, unless an inhospitable sect should forbid her bones to be laid in the public graveyard with congenial rites—but she knows her Sav-ior—and many a memorable fact will she tell you concerning Him! These Grace-taught saints know more about Christ, though the world calls them ignorant, than the most learned men can possibly know by human teaching! Thus you see they come to Jesus Christ from every quarter of mental condition.

And I thank God they come to Christ from all points of theological thought. My Brother over yonder, who loves the eternal purposes, how readily he comes to Jesus from considering the Covenant and the everlasting decrees of Grace. It is pleasant to come over the eternal hills to Jesus! My other Friend, over yonder, does not love this way. I wish he did. He dwells mainly upon the responsibility of man and upon the great love of God to all mankind, yet he comes to Jesus across the plains of infinite benevolence and delights to see in Jesus the sinner's All in All. John Wesley sings—

"Jesus, lover of my soul." And Toplady, who viewed things from another point of view, sings—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me."

They come from every quarter! Thank God that it is so! Different lines of thought about the Truth of God meet in Jesus, even as all great railways meet in London.

I trust we have come to Christ from every quarter of our own spiritual experience. We have been cast into the deeps, but, "out of the depth, have I cried unto You, O Lord, and You heard me." Upon the heights, also, we have stood, but there we have sung, "You make my feet like hinds' feet. You make me to stand upon my high places." We have exulted in God and we have comforted ourselves in God! We have delighted ourselves in the light of His Countenance and we have also rejoiced under the shadow of His wings. From all quarters of emotion we have turned to the Beloved of our souls. And so from different characteristics of mind have souls come to Christ. Mary is contemplative and for her there is a seat at the Master's feet. Peter is active and for him there are sheep to be fed and lambs to be tended.

In our Lord, persons of various dispositions can all find what they need. The loving mind which dives deep and is a little inclined to the mystic school can find, in Jesus, the fullest scope, even as Madame Guyon did. Warm hearts need no other fuel for their flame than the love of Jesus—see how that theme kept George Herbert in a perpetual glow! And you, too, my Brothers and Sisters, active and energetic, you who spend and are spent in philanthropic works and deeds of devotion to God, you find in Jesus Christ all that can sustain your ardor and sanctify your activities. From every quarter saints come to our Lord as to a living well and never come in vain!

It makes my Lord so much the more precious to me when I remember that He is so precious to multitudes of others. 'Tis true, He is so necessary and so satisfying to my own soul that He seems as if He had been prepared on purpose for me! Infinite wisdom could not devise a Savior who suited my case more fully! It does, however, increase my joy in Him that thousands, and tens of thousands, think the same, each one for himself! Tradition says of the manna that it tasted just as every man desired and was grateful to every palate—it is so with the Bread of Heaven—it has a choice adaptation to each Believer's need and a fullness to supply the necessities of each tried heir of the kingdom! You may have a whole Christ to yourself and yet millions of happy spirits are doing the same and living upon His inexhaustible stores! Rejoice, my Brothers and Sisters, in this, for to the generous heart this piles up the ecstasy and gives us Heaven upon Heaven in the fact that so vast a number, as well as ourselves, find their all in Jesus.

Not only do we come to Him, but Grace brings other Believers to Him from every quarter. Let it be one of our aims always to be path-makers—to clear the ways for our Brethren to come nearer to our Lord. When we see them coming from the woods, let us show them the way over the trail. Or if they find it hard to climb the steep ascent from the valley, let us lend them a hand. If we fear that they are too high up, let us show them the way down by walking humbly, ourselves. Wherever they are, let it be our endeavor to bring them to Christ! Our Lord Jesus is the common meeting place of saints—let us commune with all who commune with Him.

Let us maintain holy communion with those who love Him and we shall be blessed thereby. My Brother knows something about my Lord that I do not—and I know something about Him which he has not yet learned—therefore we can aid each other by holy communion. In the olden times, "they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another," and I know it was good talk, for God, Himself, listened to it. It is said that "the Lord listened and heard," and He thought so much of what was spoken that He made a volume of it, "and a book of memorial was written for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His name."

IV. Lastly, Brothers and Sisters, my text is full of THAT GREAT GATHERING WHICH IS APPROACHING NEARER EVERY MOMENT, and which will be complete when—

"All the chosen race Shall meet around the Throne, Shall bless the conduct of His Grace And make His wonders known." Saints come to Jesus in Glory from every quarter! He is the center of the Church. Many have reached the Lord, up yonder, and are now bowing before His Throne. Men of every age are there, from Adam to Moses, from Joshua to the time of the kings and the Prophets—and even to this hour they continue to come to Him. They come from every quarter of the globe and from every race and tribe. What a gathering it must be! Heaven is cosmopolitan and Christ has abolished all distinction between Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—they all meet in Him and He is All and in all.

What a mixed company and yet how uniform in their joy and in their satisfaction in Him. David said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness." You are not David, but you can say the same! Yes, we shall

meet in Him from every quarter! The main point to dwell upon is that they, wherever they hail from, all come to Him. It is a very pleasant prospect to think of meeting our fellow servants in Heaven. But it must never be allowed to bear comparison with the prospect of meeting the Master. Of course we shall see them all. Old John Ryland said most quaintly—

"They all shall be there, the great and the small; Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul," and no doubt we shall! Like peers we shall sit in that royal house of lords! We, each one, shall take his own seat in that parliament of kings, for He has "made us kings and priests unto God."

What companions we shall have! What most high and solemn communion with the best and purest spirits that ever scattered light over the darkness of this world! But here is the point, we shall be with Him. We shall not care much, I believe, about anything else compared with being with Him where He is and beholding His Glory. This is Heaven to me! We shall come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn—but then, since Christ is in them all and they are all members of His body, it will be only another form of coming to Him and, will, by no means interfere, but rather enlarge our fellowship with our glorious Head!

I would like to say, just to finish, that I believe this idea of coming to Christ from every quarter is capable of an expansion which I leave for you to think upon and will not, therefore, explain at length. The day comes when the Lord Je-

sus will "gather together in one, all things which are in Him, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth." Then shall He head up all the things which are in Him and these shall come to Him from every quarter. Of this, His mysterious Person is the prophecy and foretaste! Is it not wonderful what a gathering up of everything there is in the Person of our blessed Lord? The material universe has a part in Him, for He was born into that flesh and blood which links us to the inanimate matter beneath our feet.

With mind in its lower form He is akin, for He had and has a human soul. To spirits He is Brother, for He is the Head of the spiritual seed. To crown all, with God, Himself, He is one! God, considered in His absolute Godhead, stands alone, and a gulf divides Him from all creatures. But God in Christ Jesus takes the whole sweep of creation into Himself and when you shall behold Him in the ages to come, this will more and more clearly appear to you. The glorious Christ of God brings all creation to a focus and unites it in one, around His Person. We shall understand this better, by-and-by. Meanwhile it is sweet to muse upon it.

I saw a scene depicted upon a painted window of the Church of St. Etienne, in Lyons, which struck me very much. It represents our Lord after the temptation in the wilderness, when He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him. The angels are depicted as bringing Him fruits and drinks, bread and meat and making harmony on instruments of music. Above Him the sun shines softly upon Him. Over His head is a tree bearing fruit, the branches of which seem to bow to Him, laden with mellow refreshment. At His feet a little stream warbles as it flows and causes the grass and the wild flowers to flourish around Him. While the flowers are blooming for Him beneath, tender doves above Him are cooing with delight and birds of the air are pausing to sing to Him.

A gentle fawn is fearlessly drinking from the brook close to His hands, while a lion, humbly lying down before Him, is paying Him homage. A rabbit is feeding at ease right by the wild beast. Everything is happy, peaceful and at home. The angels and the rabbits, the lion and the gazelle, the heavens above and the flowers beneath all meet in Him—even the sun seems to have, himself, become a lovely flower and turns to the yet greater light! Jesus is the center of them all! I admire the artist's thought—it has truth within it.

Our Lord has blessed and consecrated the very earth, for it felt the impressions of His holy feet. And the water of the river is no longer common or unclean, for was He not buried in Baptism there? Every sunbeam is now gracious, for the sun has looked on HIM!

The lower creatures, too, are to be treated tenderly, for He loved them. They came to Him from the time when the oxen fed from His manger where He lay as a Baby to the day when the ass was not divided from her foal when He rode through the streets of Jerusalem. Let us treat all things reverently, for He condescended to think of them all. From the angels down to the waves of the sea and the clay of which He made healing ointment, all things in their spheres ministered upon Him and so they came to Him from every quarter! And the day comes when the creatures emancipated from the bondage to which they have been unwillingly subjected shall find redemption in Him (Rom. 8:21)!

To Him shall they come from every quarter—as many as are in Him—and both the lowest material and the loftiest spirit shall rejoice in the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness dwells. Then shall dragons and all deeps, mountains and all hills, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, kings of the earth and all people praise the name of the Lord! And the heavens and the Heaven of heavens, angels, sun and moon and stars of light shall magnify His Glory! Then shall the trees of the forests rejoice before the Lord! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 1:9. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416, 425, 436.

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