

Gathering or Scattering

by G. Campbell Morgan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being with or against Jesus Christ, and the need to gather or scatter in accordance with this relationship.

Scripture: Matthew 12:30, John 11:52, John 17:21, Acts 17:26, Romans 12:10, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Galatians 5:15, Ephesians 4:3, Hebrews 10:24-25, James 3:18

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "The Call to Gather"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the critical choice every individual faces: to gather with Christ or scatter against Him. He reflects on the dangers of indifference in a tolerant society, contrasting the purity of the persecuted Church with the compromises of a patronized Church. Morgan asserts that Jesus' mission was to gather the scattered children of God, and he challenges listeners to evaluate their influence--whether they are contributing to unity or division. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to actively participate in Christ's work of gathering, urging believers to take sides and live out their faith in a way that draws others to Him.

Transcript

We are living in a day that is known as the day of toleration. We have ceased very largely to desire to force our own particular views upon other people save by the methods of persuasion. Torture and excommunication are things of the past. And I believe that there cannot be too much toleration. No man has any right to usurp the judgment throne of Jesus Christ and pass sentence upon his fellow-men. But while this is perfectly true, we cannot forget that the very freedom of the atmosphere in which we live has produced in individual life something of indifference to the truth of God. Much as we deprecate any attempt by persecution to compel belief, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the old days of persecution were also the days of purity in the Church of Christ. It is a very remarkable thing that the Church of Christ persecuted has been the Church of Christ pure. The Church of Christ patronised has always become the Church of Christ impure. The very saddest day in Church history was the day that Constantine espoused the cause of Christianity. When an earthly emperor and empire took upon them to patronise the Nazarene, to say that the religion of the Nazarene should have a position under the wing of the state, that day there passed into Christendom the most damning and blighting influence that has ever touched it. Men and women, when they had to face death for the things that they held, were pure. Men and women who were not prepared to do this kept outside the churches of Jesus Christ. All that has passed away. No one will persecute you now for being a Christian. There is a sense, I know, in which

"they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"; but the old days of fiery tests of faith have passed away, and with their passing, we have entered into a region of peril and danger. The peril and danger that threatens us to-day is that of indifference.

Now, if this be true--and you know it is-- it is well for us sometimes to come into the presence of Jesus Christ, and to learn that while no man has any right to pronounce sentence upon us, yet Christ has. And not only has He the right to do that, but in unmistakable language in His teaching He has made a clean line of demarkation between man and man, setting certain people upon one side and certain upon the other. No verse that I know of in the whole realm of the teaching of Jesus Christ is more searching than the thirtieth verse of the twelfth chapter of Matthew:

"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth."

One can imagine that it fell from the lips of Jesus quietly and calmly, but it is a veritable throne of judgment, dividing men swiftly and surely into two opposite camps, leaving no via media, no middle way, no neutral ground. As the Master uttered these words in the old days, and by uttering them divided the crowd in front of Him, so from that time until now, through every successive century, amongst all sorts and conditions of men, this verse has come as the line of divine cleavage, separating men to the right and to the left.

Here in this gathering we are made up of a great many differently circumstanced persons, but as God looks upon us He moves us to the right and to the left. He ranks us amid the gatherers or the scatterers. No one takes a middle position.

A great and terrible mistake we are constantly making to-day is that of comparing ourselves with ourselves. We test the experience of to-day by the experience of yesterday. We allow ourselves to be puffed up because we think our conduct is a little superior to every one else's. Now, let us be done with all this comparison of self with self and man with man. Let us come to the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ and see what He means, and where we stand in the light of it.

In order that we may rightly do that, we must first of all understand what our Lord meant when He said, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." I shall, therefore, consider briefly in the first place the claim that Jesus Christ makes for Himself. Inferentially, and yet with perfect clearness, He sets up on His own behalf a certain very definite claim. In the second place, we shall notice how that claim defines our position.

What is the claim that the Master sets up for Himself? Listen: "He that is not with Me is against Me." So far we have no claim made; but in order that the statement may be understood He goes on to explain it by saying: "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad." His claim is that He is the Gatherer. His mission to the world was to gather together.

Having set up this claim for Himself, He proceeds to say to the men and women around Him, that every human being is exercising through life the great force that gathers together with Christ, or that other force, which is of hell, that scatters abroad against Christ. Christ claims for Himself that He is God's Gatherer. Christ says that every man is either with or against Him, gathering or scattering.

Let us take these two things and look at them a little more closely, patiently, and prayerfully, in order that we may understand them. What does the Master mean when He says "gathereth with Me"? In the Gospel

of John, the eleventh chapter, forty-ninth and following verses, occurs a passage throwing light on the subject: "A certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." I am not interested for the moment in these extraordinary words Caiaphas uttered, but I pass on to that which comes after, and which is an inspired exposition of the priest's words: "Now this he said not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad." It is thus most explicitly stated that "not the nation only," but "the children of God that are scattered abroad" are to be gathered. Jesus Christ came into the world to gather into one the scattered family of the Most High.

Now, turn away from the Gospel narrative and come to the day in which we live. There is a phrase that has been very much on the lips and pens of certain men for the last five and twenty years or more: the "solidarity of humanity." It is one of those phrases that sounds as if there was a good deal in it, and men have made the most of it. They have written books under the impulse of what there is behind that phrase; they have formulated philosophies, designing them upon that phrase. Trench tells us that it comes to us from the Communists. "The solidarity of humanity." What do they mean when they talk about the solidarity of humanity? It means that humanity is not a gathering together of units, each one separate and alone, but that humanity is one; that all men are dependent upon all other men, and that the race is united from its beginning to its end; that this particular generation of which you and I form a part owes an enormous amount to the generations that have preceded it; that we are helping to make the history of the generations that are coming after us; that what Kingsley sang about the new-born babe is perfectly true; that that child is "heir of all the ages." Not only is humanity one when you trace it in its movements through history, but in its relationship to-day. Every nation of the world is linked to every other nation of the world. We owe something to other men; other men owe much to us. "No man liveth unto himself." The race is one. bound up by bonds that cannot be broken.

Now, if Trench is right, that we get that phrase from the Communists, the truth that is enshrined in it we do not get from the Communists. It is a divine truth. It is a revelation of the purpose and thought of God for humanity.

What is God's thought for the human race? Hear it in these words of inspiration: "He hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth." The divine ideal for humanity is, that humanity is to be one family; that man should serve his brother man, and in that service find his purest delight; that man should make perpetual acknowledgment every day and always of his indebtedness to his fellowmen; that there should be no self-consciousness and self-seeking which is at the expense of the right and the comfort and the blessedness of other men. That is the divine ideal. It is upon that ideal of humanity as a whole that Jesus 'Christ based all His work and all His teaching; and that the apostles of Jesus Christ prosecuted their mission in the world.

But is this realised? As I have said, men are writing about it. America has produced some men who have dreamed wonderful dreams on this very line. There has lately passed to his rest a most remarkable man, Edward Bellamy, whose books I have read with keen interest, and have detected beneath them the aspiration of a great heart after a divine ideal that he never understood; and the trouble is, Edward Bellamy wanted to get society into the kingdom of God without taking it by the way of the cross of Jesus Christ, and he could never do it. He and other dreamers of beautiful dreams, in which men shall lose the miserable idea that any work is dishonorable, wanted to pass into that realm outside the actual, positive,

interfering government of God; and it can never be done. You cannot grow the tulips of the kingdom of God except you get the bulbs from heaven. Never forget that.

The fact is, that is an ideal, a dream. How about the realisation? There is a great disintegration of humanity. We are broken up; we are split; we are divided. Look where you will you see that the divine ideal of the human race is lost. I do not want to be misunderstood at this point, but I feel that you are ready to take a high and spiritual outlook upon these things, and that you will bear with me patiently when I say that nationality is a poor business; that patriotism is something that perhaps is necessary for to-day, in the midst of the chaos and break-up of the great ideal of God for humanity, but that in the day when the King shall reign we will talk no more about my nationality as against yours. We shall enter into the larger ideal that we are one, the round world over; that every man with the image of God upon him, the breath of God in him, is a brother man, to be loved and served and cared for. We shall pass away from the idea that because we are a great and mighty nation we have any business to override and destroy other nations that are weaker than we are. We shall learn that every man has rights because he is a child of God, and we shall respect them. But that time has not come yet. If you want to know something about the disintegration of humanity as against the solidarity of humanity, see the civilised, the Christianised (God forgive us for abusing the word!)-the Christianised nations of Europe watching each other with a suspicion that is devilish and horrible. There is nothing of the Spirit of Christ in it.

Come down from the national outlook and consider the home. There is nothing that is saddening me more in England to-day than the break-up of our home life; that the old family circles that made a poet write these words, "The heart has many a dwelling place, but only once a home," are passing away from our country. Children are growing away from their parents, and parents from their children, and the old strong bands that made up a strong nation because we were strong in our family relationships are being broken. Everywhere there are marks of disintegration.

Then come into the Church of God. Do you get any comfort out of the division in the Church of God? I hope you don't. I hope you have never said that it is part of the divine plan that Christendom should be split into a thousand fragments. I tell you it isn't. He Who prayed the great intercessory prayer which took hold of heaven in my behalf and your behalf for all time, said, "Father, I will that they may be one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." We are not one, and that is why the world doesn't know that God sent Jesus.

Come down into the detail of life, and you will find the same break-up everywhere; that instead of there being oneness in the human family, there is infinite division and infinite distrust. Men do not trust each other in commerce or in social life or in church life. Everywhere there are the marks of a great disintegrating force, which has broken humanity into a thousand parts, and the great ideal of the oneness of the race is lost.

Christ came to gather together into one the children of God that are scattered. That was His mission. How is He going to do it? He will do it, as God does everything, fundamentally. He will never tinker with externals; He will go to the heart of the matter. He will never attempt to paint on the outside that which is rotten. He will demolish that which is old, and He will bring in better things. And how does He do it? He comes into the midst of men Himself to reveal God, to restore the divine government, to do battle in His own life and in His cross and passion, with the sin that has divided humanity.

That was His mission. He came to gather together. He came to wipe out the lines that create nationalities, and bring us back into the one family of God; to bind together into closer harmony the families of the earth; to heal the breach between man and man; to drive away from the earth every form of difference and dissension.

But some one says, "Didn't He say, 'I am come to send a sword'?"

That was a statement of the necessity of the Gospel He preached. He knew the condition of man, and He knew that His announcement of divine kingship, the only truth that could ever heal the divisions, must, before the great work is completed, scatter the sword, and apparently rend humanity further and further apart. But that rending is only that which precedes the healing, and the sword He sends is the sword which makes way for purity, and opens the door for peace. So He came to gather together.

Oh, how one would like to take up His life and look at it in that light! His teachings, His miracles, look at Him again! Healing wounds, gathering together a few men in the first place, and of them saying, "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren? Those who do My Father's will." What did He mean? He meant to say, Here is the higher relationship, above the relationship of blood, the relationship of spiritual affinity in the kingdom of God; and mother and brethren pass out of sight in the presence of this new relationship. He says to me, as He said to the men then:

"If you are coming after Me, you must leave father, mother, and husband and wife. You must put Me first."

I say, "Master, it is a hard thing to do."

He replies: "But that is what I did for you. I put you before mother and brother. If you come to Me you must do as much for Me as I have done for you."

And so He created that little spiritual circle, and He came to gather others into it, and thank God, His work will never cease until He Himself comes again and establishes the kingdom out of which He will drive all dissension, and into which He will gather the children of God that are scattered abroad. It is the great work of Christ to heal the wounds, to make dissension cease, and to bring the world around Himself into a sacred brotherhood, in the Fatherhood of God. That is the great mission of Christ.

Now I pass to the second point. After that vision of His work, what does He say? "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth."

Jesus came to gather, and He says that I am helping or hindering, with Him or against Him; that I am gathering or scattering. Let me say, first of all, that the influence I exert in the world is created by my relationship to Jesus Christ. If I am with Him, I am a gatherer. If I am His and He is mine, if Christ be formed in me actually, what will be the effect? I shall be gathering with Him, bringing men to Him; and in bringing men to Him I am bringing men to each other. Did that ever strike you? The Man stands amid humanity, and is its center of attraction Godward and heavenward. In proportion as men are brought near to Him, in that proportion they are coming near to each other; and any attempt to get men near together, apart from the attraction of Jesus Christ and His power to hold them together, is a dream that cannot be realised. Men have the dream of unity, but they haven't seen the center of attraction to unite them.

And how will it work out? It will begin in your home. You will gather your children together first. It is time some Christians ceased trying to gather men together who live in the slums, and gave their time to getting their children together. One of my deacons once said to me, casually, lightly, smilingly, as though it was a

very pretty, pleasing thing to say:

"Do you know, Mr. Morgan, I don't see my bairns"--and he had two beautiful children--"I haven't seen my bairns awake for several months."

I said to him: "What do you mean?"

"Well," he said, "don't you see, I have been so fearfully busy, business is growing at such a rate, that I am up and off in the morning before they are awake, and I do not get home at night until they are in bed; and on Sunday I am down at the church all day, and I hardly see them then."

I said to him: "My dear brother, for God's sake and for your children's sake, drop something in your business; and if you cannot do that, drop something at the church, and look after your bairns. It is an infinitely better investment to give your time to them and to keep your hand on them than anything else you can do."

A man that cannot hold his family together for Christ by the attractive power of Christ in his own life isn't wanted in the church; let him keep out. That man cannot do anything for God in public places if his own home is devastated and broken up by the principle of rebellion against God. And if the influence a man is exerting on his family is an influence that scatters, that man is not with Christ. If you are with Christ, hold your bairns for Him, and your family will be God's first circle of the kingdom, as it always has been, and it will be a witness to the power of Christ in you, and through you, to gather men together. We had a craze across the water a few years ago, an aesthetic craze. Men raved about dandelions and about lilies. Men posed in womanly attitudes and said that they could exist for a week upon a lily. It was neurotic; it was rotten; and the high priest of the whole business, the apostle of the aesthetic craze, had to go to prison as a common prisoner for beastliness of conduct that cannot be named in public. If you try to gather men together by painting a lily on a plate and giving them a sweet willow pattern --oh, God, the mockery of it! You cannot touch men's hearts like that. If you are not with Christ you cannot gather men, I don't care what your philosophy is, what your policy is, or what the basis of art, or education, or culture, or anything you please. No power the world has ever heard taught or preached, save the power of the crucified, risen Christ, is sufficient to gather men together into one.

You say, "Can't we improve the dwellings of the poor?"

Yes, God help us to do it; but one of the best ways to do it is to improve the man that lives in the dwelling.

I remember some years ago conducting a mission, and one of the office-bearers of the church where I was, said to me:

"Mr. Morgan, I want you to come and see some people. A girl was married out of our Sunday school three years ago, to a man who is a slave to drink and impurity and gambling. I would like you to come along and see her."

I went--it was in '85--on a cold February day, to see that girl. Oh, I cannot picture the home to you! It was one of those awful houses in the midlands of England, reached by passing through an entry between other houses, into a back court. When I got to the entry with my friend, some children who were hovering and shivering there, hearing our steps approaching, rushed away. We followed them and went into the house. I see that room now. There was a broken table standing there, a chair with the back broken off standing by it, no fire in the grate; upon the mantel-shelf a cup and saucer, broken; and not another article of furniture

that my eye rested on in that room. And there stood a woman in unwomanly rags with the mark of a brutal fist upon her face, and three ill-clad bairns clinging to her gown. She said:

"Excuse the children running from you, but they thought that it was father."

Oh, the tragedy of it!

When I got on to the rostrum that night to preach, my friend came to me and said:

"He is here."

I said: "Who is here?"

"That woman's husband; he is sitting right down in front of you."

Now, I don't often preach at one man, but I did that night. I put aside what I was going to talk about, and read the story of the prodigal, and I asked God to help me talk about it, and for about a solid hour I preached at that man. Do you think I hammered at him and scolded him? Not I. I told him God loved him, there and then; and when we got to our after-meeting, I asked, "What man is coming home to-night?" And he was the very first to rise. He came forward, and as I went down from the rostrum and gave that meeting into some one else's hands, and got my arm around him and prayed and wept with him, he entered into the kingdom of God.

My friend said to me one day about twelve months later, "I want you to go and see some people."

I said, "Who?"

He said, "Do you remember going to see a woman last year whose husband was converted? I want you to come and see those people."

I went. We hadn't gone far--it was February of the next year--before I said to him, "Friend, where are you taking me?"

"Oh, we are going to see those people."

"But," I said, "we are not going the same way."

"No," he said, "they have moved."

Moved! Why did they move? Why, the man was converted, and he soon changed his dwelling-place. The man was remade, and he remade his environment; and he had gone, not into a palace, but into a cottage in the main street.

If I could paint pictures I would paint those two. I can see that home now. It was on a Sunday, after the afternoon service, and he sat by the fire with his three bairns, who had run away from him a year ago. One was on his knee, another on his shoulder, and another stood by him; and I never heard a sweeter solo in my life than the solo the kettle sang on the hob that day. The woman that last year was dressed in unwomanly rags was clothed, and the sunlight of love was on her face.

That is how you must deal with the problem of environment. Begin at its middle. Touch the man who makes the beastly environment, and remake him, and he will soon move out of the tenement-house and

out of the slum; he will soon find his way on to higher levels. That is the way to gather men and women. Unless you are with Jesus Christ, you can try education and culture, but it all comes short of life, and without life there is no remaking of men.

Now, my brother, are you with Christ in this enterprise?

My last word is a reversal of that position. And now we come to this text as to a judgment-seat. It is not only true that your influence will be created by your relationship to Jesus Christ; it is also true that your relationship to Jesus Christ is revealed by the influence you are exercising.

I am getting less and less anxious to hear what men say. What is the influence you are exerting in the world? Show me a man who is gathering men, who is healing wounds, who is closing up breaches, who is coming into life with a sacred, subtle, forceful mien which makes men love each other because he is there, that man is with Christ. I am not particular whether he spells his denomination with a P or C, or anything you like; the point is whether he is gathering men. May God help us to drop trying to order men out of service because they do not follow with us.

You say, "You know it is apostolic."

I am not particular about being in apostolic succession; they made such miserable blunders right along. Go back to the ninth chapter of the Gospel of Mark. John said unto Christ:

"Master, we saw one casting out devils."

"Oh, did you? You must have been glad, John."

"Yes, and in the name of Jesus."

"Blessed work! Glorious work! I want to know that man."

"We saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him."

"Why, why?"

"Because he followed not after us." "Followed not us," it really is. "Because he followed not us."

Jesus said, "Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a mighty work in My name, and be able to speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is for us."

Ah, that is the test! Do you know a man that casts out devils, my dear brother, in the Presbyterian Church, and he isn't a Presbyterian? Don't hinder him. "Oh, no," you say, "we shouldn't think of doing that; he is a Congregationalist." But supposing he isn't that; supposing he is none of your ists and your isms; supposing he is just a man that has got into touch with Christ and hardly knows the truth himself yet. Let him alone! He cannot work a work in the name of Christ and speak evil of Him. If he is not against the Christ, he is with Him. Take this larger outlook, this practical test of position.

But there is another word, which is part of that last thought: a man who is scattering is not a Christian.

Do you know that man who has lost his children?

"What do you mean? a man that has buried them?"

Oh, no, no! God help him, it would have been better if he had, long ago. He has lost them. He has no hold on them, no influence over them. They have gone from his home and scattered, and going from his house they have gone from his God with great relief. They were glad to go away from him so as to get away from his God, and they are swearing against God to-day.

"Why?"

Because of that man's influence.

"But that man is a church member."

I don't care; he isn't a Christian.

"But that man preaches."

I don't care; if he has lost his children it is because he has not been with Christ, but against Him. Show me the man that is splitting and dividing the church, dividing the nation, setting man against man, that man isn't a Christian. I don't care what his subscription is, what his profession is, what the noise he makes in the world; all these things are nothing. If that man isn't gathering with Jesus, he is scattering; and if he is scattering, he is not with, he is against, Christ.

So much for the teaching of that verse, as I understand it. Now, where are you, and where am I? Am I with the Master, or am I against Him?

You say: "Well, I am not exactly with Him, but I am not against Him."

You are wrong. There is no middle place.

"Oh," you say, "there must be a middle place. I have never done anything for Him; I have never led a soul to Him; I have never preached for Him or spoken for Him, or given a tract away for Him, or even given a cup of cold water for His sake; but I have never hindered Him; I haven't spoken against Him; I haven't denounced Christianity."

Some of you have been in London. When you visit London again, get down in the center of the great city and stand still and look in a window. You won't be there long before a man in blue will put his hand on your shoulder and say: "Please move on." "Why should I move on?" "You are blocking the traffic." "I am not interfering with any one." "Your standing still and doing nothing is going to cause an obstruction here; you must please move on. Keep moving. You can go that way, or you can go that, but you cannot stand still; you must move."

My brother, my sister, you cannot stand still. The moment you stand still and say, "I am just going to be an interested onlooker," you become an obstacle in His way, you retard His progress. If you stand, some one else is going to stand. Don't you know that? You can't stand still without impeding progress. If you are not with Him, you are against Him. If you are not exercising the great force that gathers, by your very negation of that, you are exercising the force that scatters men here and there and everywhere. Men and women, will you take sides? Cease trying to be neutral, I pray you. Whether you have ever before professed to be a Christian or not, I care not. I appeal to you now. I call for men and women to take sides definitely and positively in this matter. The great Lord Jesus, sweet and strong, tender and mighty, came from heaven to earth to gather men together, and He says every one is helping Him or hindering Him. Which is it?

Do not say, I beseech you, "It is no use for me to pretend to take sides with Christ; I can do so little."

It is your life that helps Him, not the extra activity in which you engage now and again. What the Master wants to-day in all the cities and villages of England and America is men and women who are living with Him. America is waiting for the manifestation of the sons and daughters of God; and wherever you are manifested to be related to God in Christ, you become part of the great force that is gathering men together. You contribute by that relationship to God in Christ to the work of Christ in healing wounds, closing up the breaches, and making all the families of the earth one, as God has purposed they should be.

What we want is not to ask men so much to take sides, because they are doing that whether or no; what we need is to appeal to them to take the side of Christ. Isn't it better to construct than to destroy, to heal than to wound, to gather men than to scatter them? Then will you not be among the number of those who come to the Nazarene and say:

"Oh, Jesus, by Thy infinite compassion, by Thy love passing all human telling, Thou hast conquered me. I am come to Thee. Take my life, poor, weak, insufficient by every standard of human measurement, but let Thy life flow into it, and through it, that my life may make some little contribution to the realisation of Thy great purpose."

Lord Jesus, from to-day let me more than ever be 2 gatherer of Thine. Prevent me from scattering. Do this, Lord, by taking more complete possession of me than ever before. To this end I yield to Thee all I am, and have, and hope for, in order that through me some part of Thy kingdom may come and Thy will be done. Amen.

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