

The Master Is Come

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of personal seeking and transformation for revival through the story of Lazarus and the arrival of Jesus in Bethany.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 18:19, John 11:28-43, Acts 3:19, James 5:16

Topics: "Personal Revival", "Prayer Initiative"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the story of Lazarus' resurrection in Bethany, emphasizing the deep love and connection between Jesus, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. He highlights the importance of seeking Jesus personally for revival, rather than relying on others, drawing parallels to the need for personal fervor and prayer in seeking God's intervention. Chapman stresses the significance of individual initiative in sparking revivals, citing examples of personal prayers leading to community-wide awakenings. He underscores the necessity of tears, personal accountability, and removing obstacles in the path to experiencing God's power and revival.

Transcript

My text is in John 11:28 - "The Master is come and calleth for thee." This passage takes us to the home in Bethany where Jesus loved to be. It has to do with the sickness and death of Lazarus, and his resurrection from the dead. Some years ago I heard a distinguished man of God preach from this text. The light of heaven was on his face and the fire of heaven was in his message. The outline of his sermon remains with me still, and I am going to use his outline as I preach to you from this text.

It must have been a very remarkable family that lived in the Bethany home. Martha and Mary and Lazarus. It may not have been the largest house in Bethany, nevertheless Jesus loved to tarry there. If you tell me that you have the finest home in this city and Jesus is not there, then it is not the finest. If you tell me that yours is a home of poverty and Jesus abides with you, then I know that you do not mind your poverty.

No one can think of the Bethany home without being deeply touched. Martha and Mary and Lazarus and - Jesus! One day there came a cloud, the size of a man's hand, over that home in Bethany. Lazarus was sick. The cloud increased from day to day until it covered all the sky. When the sisters knew that their brother was sick unto death, they called a messenger and sent a message to Jesus. They did not say, "Go to the Master and tell Him that Lazarus is ill," but they said this, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." They knew that Jesus would know. How they watched for the return of the messenger, but the messenger delayed and Lazarus died. In those countries the preparations for death must be made very

quickly. So they laid Lazarus at once in the tomb. When they went back to the home everything spoke of him. The old couch on which he rested, the manuscripts he read, the sandals he wore, the robe that was wrapped around him, - everything spoke of Lazarus, and Lazarus was gone. Just when their hearts were aching to the breaking, a messenger came saying that Jesus was coming to Bethany. Mary sat still in the house, but Martha went out to meet him, and when she met him she began in a tone of complaint, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." It was then that Jesus spoke his wonderful words: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Something in what he said and in the way he said it touched Martha's heart, and she rushed back to her sister and cried out in the words of the text, "The Master is come and calleth for thee." Then the sisters went out together to meet Jesus. Presently they were standing at the tomb and weeping. Jesus was weeping too. Then He stooped down to look into the tomb from which the stone had been rolled away, and cried out the dead man, "Come forth." I scarcely need to rehearse the story to you because it is so familiar. And now I follow the outline that I have mentioned, and in so doing we shall find suggested in this story the steps that are essential to a revival.

First, when Mary and Martha wanted Jesus they did not go themselves to Jesus, but they sent a messenger. I have always had an idea that if they had gone themselves, saying, "Master, Lazarus is sick, and if he dies our hearts will be broken and our home desolate," perhaps Jesus might have come back to Bethany with them at once and stayed the disease. They did not go themselves. They sent a messenger. And do you know that this is the way people expect revivals nowadays? They are anxious to have them come, but they do not put themselves into the work. They send someone else. In earlier days when people desired a revival, they waited upon God in fasting and prayer. They even spent nights in prayer. They forgot to eat and sleep. Fathers and mothers became concerned for their children. Wives were in agony about their husbands. Ministers stood up to preach and they looked like dead men. Often they preached to the accompaniment of sobs. When men and women sought God for themselves in this spirit the foundations were shaken, the heavens were opened, churches were quickened, and souls were converted.

I believe in the work of the evangelist with all my heart. I keep before me two or three ideals. My greatest inspiration is Dwight L. Moody. Almost all that I know of evangelistic work I learned at his feet. I continue to use his methods. I have prayed God through all the years that I might have his spirit in preaching. I came in touch with him first when I was a university student. Later I sat at his feet as a young minister. I entered evangelistic work under his direction. I used to take his after meetings when he was unable to take them after preaching. Yet much as I believe in evangelists, there is not an evangelist in the world who has the power to bring a revival to your soul. You can have it only by seeking after God for yourself. We have praying ministers here and splendid committees at work, yet the revival tarries and men are not saved. People are not asking with sobs: "What must I do to be saved?" Thus far I have received just two letters from people who were concerned for their children. Let us not make the mistake of the sisters in Bethany, who did not go themselves to seek after Christ, but sent a messenger instead.

Something else is to be noted. Only one of them went after all. Martha went, but Mary stayed in the house. This is the way revivals begin. No man has ever known of a whole community being roused at once. No minister can tell of a whole church being on fire at one time. One will be interested and will go forth to meet Christ like Martha. This city will never be moved by masses of people who are interested in revival. No, it will begin with individuals. Some minister will have a deep concern. He cannot eat or sleep. He feels as if he would die. He sits at his desk with tears running down his cheeks. Or some old saint of God will cry out,

saying: "Oh, Lord, revive Thy work! Revive Thy work!" When the revival of '57 swept through New York, it was traced to one man who spent days on his knees alone with nobody to pray with him. Then another came and another, and another, until there was a whole company of praying people. New York was stirred. Philadelphia was shaken. Chicago was moved. The whole American continent was stirred. The revival swept across the sea to Great Britain. It started with one man on his knees. There may be some man in this audience now who feels that his life has never counted much for God. To-night he feels that he will lay hold of God and never let go. This is the way revival begins, with one soul that is truly seeking God.

When I began my ministry in Philadelphia, I succeeded Dr. Arthur T. Pierson. It was a perilous thing for a young man to do. Mr. Moody told me that if we could have a revival, everything would go well. I stood up before the people and said: "All the people who are willing to help me, come and tell me what you will do." A famous merchant was my chief elder, and he said that I could have his carriage to make pastoral calls. Another said that he would pay the

expenses of the advertising. Others came and said that they would do this and that. Finally, down the central aisle of the church came an old Scotch woman, Mrs. Thompson. She took my hand, and, looking at me, said: "Djo you mind the little room at the head of the stairway in my house?" I said, "Yes, Mrs. Thompson." "Very well, minister," she said, "every day at twelve o'clock I will be in that little room. I will be on my knees, and I will never let go of God for you." In a short time I stood in my pulpit there and received four hundred and forty-four people. Of these, sixteen came as a direct result of the personal influence of this old Scotch woman. If there is one thing that we need more than anything else just now, it is an overmastering concern for people who are out of Christ.

Martha was not fit to talk to Mary until she had seen Jesus. At least, she had no influence. Mary said: "You might as well go and meet Him and talk to Him." Mary herself sat still in the house. You know what that means. Teeth set together, lips closed. Martha talks and talks, but Mary will not move. Finally Martha went out to meet Jesus. the moment she caught the look on His face and heard the ring of His voice, she rushed back with a new light in her eyes, a new sound in her voice, a new power in her testimony, saying, "The Master is come." When she saw Jesus, she could talk to Mary as she had not done before. You want a revival, you will have to see Jesus first. Many of us want to see this city moved for God. We must be alone with him first. Oh, my God, send a revival! We beseech thee, send a revival.

I was preaching in Lincoln, Nebraska, when I heard a woman say to her pastor: "I want you to pray for my husband and two boys." I was shocked when he said, "I shall not do it." When I asked him about it he said: "She is the most worldly woman in this city. She has led her husband and two boys into the world after her. It would be absolutely useless for me to pray so long as she professes to be a Christian and is not." This woman went to her home and said to her husband: "I want you to forgive me. I have been a church member, but a false one. I have been a professed follower of Christ, but I have denied Him. I want you to forgive me." I saw her husband converted, and the two boys came with their father. That man is to-day an elder of a church in his city.

A woman came to her minister in Springfield, Ohio and said: "Pray for my boy." The minister said: "Absolutely useless." He told her to go back and get her boy. I had a letter from her in which she told me the circumstances. "My boy came from the Central Methodist Church, where Bishop Bashford was preaching. He said to me: 'I am about persuaded to be a Christian. If you will go with me to-morrow I will settle it.'" His mother said to him: "I cannot go, I have an engagement." Writing to me, she said: "To my shame, I confess that my engagement was at a card party. I kept the engagement and my boy never went

back to the Church. I wrote to him like this: 'Dear Son, - Your mother's heart is broken. When you were a little boy, and your father insisted that I should have you sleep alone, I put you in the cradle and you cried yourself to sleep. When I woke I saw your arms stretched out towards me. Now, my boy, it is your mother, with her face tearstained, who is stretching out her arms for you. Please come.' " I saw the minister ten years afterwards and asked him about it, and he said that the boy had never come to Christ. He was absolutelu unmoved. Some of us in this city might speak and have no power. Might preach and plead and fail. We must get right with God. To your knees! To your knees!

When they reached the tomb, Mary and Martha and Jesus, the sisters were weeping., Almost the sweetest words I know are these: "Jesus wept." Tell me this. Did you ever know a revival that did not begin with a baptism of tears? Tell me, did you ever have a revival by just appointing committees, organizing a choir, and putting money into the treasury? No! I will tell you when revivals come. They come when men begin to say to their ministers: Pastor, will you pray for my family? When mothers come to the evangelist and say: Pray for my boy. When wives are so deeply interested that they say: If my husband does not come, I shall die. When signs like these appear, then make ready. I remember an experience in the village church in New York, where I was a pastor in my early ministry. I had been preaching for a long time, but there was no yielding of hearts. I called my officers together and asked them to tell me what was wrong. They could not answer me. There was an old farmer in the congregation whose name was Herman Kramer. He could not pray in public, nor could he sing or speak. On the next morning after I had talked to the officers, he hitched up his horse to the cutter. A snow-storm had come in the night, and the fences were covered. This man of seventy years of age got into his sleigh and drove four miles across the fields and fences until he came to a blacksmith shop. Hitching his horse on the outside, he went in to where the young blacksmith was hammering away on this anvil. The blacksmith looked up and said: "Mr. Kramer, what in the world brought hyou here?" All he could do was to catch hold of the blacksmith's bench with one hand to steady himself from falling. Reaching out his other hand, he said: "Your father and I were friends from boyhood. When he died I promised him that I would look after you and try to lead you to Chjrist. I have never spoken to you about your soul. Oh, Tom!" That was all he said, and he turned back home. It was not long before the blacksmith came to the meetings, driving through a blinding snowstorm. When he have his testimony, he said: "I have never been moved by a sermon in my life, but when Herman Kramer stood there sobbing in my shop, I said to myself, it is about time Tom Funston was in earnest himself." Revivals come with tears.

When Jesus stood by the grave, I can hear Him saying: "Take ye away the stone." He could have done it Himself, but the Master will not do what you must do yourself. His word to us tonight is: "Take away the stone." I am speaking to you all in a kindly spirit, but I testify to you that there will never be a revival until many of us take away the stones that are in the way. Some man has not spoken to his boy about Christ. Someone who calls himself a Christian has never said a word to any of his employees. Talk about the difficulties between capital and labor - I believe there would be no such thing if the spirit of Jesus controlled both sides.

Take away the stone. When they took away the stone at the grave of Lazarus, can you not see Him? Hallelujah! What a Saviour! I can shut my eyes and see Him as He stooped down and Looked into the tomb. I can hear Him say: "Lazarus, come forth." Mr. Moody once said that He called him by name because if He had said, "Come forth," everybody who was dead would have heard Him and gotten up ahead of time., So He said: "Lazarus, come forth." Your boy might be saved tonight. Your girl, your husband, if you would take away the stone. Oh, if we would begin to do this there would not be an

indifferent Christian left in this city. The floodgates would be opened and God's power would pour forth. Now, my friends, I have preached my sermon. I have nothing else to say, except that my heart aches and my soul longs to see the power of God manifested here. Frequently, in Australia, when Mr. Alexander led the choir in a song called "Someone's Denying the Master To-night." it was hardly necessary for me to preach. I saw eight hundred men one night pressing their way into the inquiry room and dropping on their knees to say: "I yield." I saw them rising up and singing: "He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free."

Let me say the text over again: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." There can be no doubt about it. Maybe you are a Christian, and maybe you are not. Let us get right with God now. Let us open our hearts to His Spirit.

Blessed God, our Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, we pray that the Spirit may search us to-night. We pray that everything that is wrong may be taken away from us. Let the Holy Ghost come like a fire upon us. Oh, our God, if there is anything in our lives that stands in the way, take it from us. Oh, God, do not let us drift from Thee. Do not let us be a barrier in the way of others. In Jesus' precious Name. Amen!

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