

If Any Man Thirst: Part I

by James Webster

The sermon emphasizes the importance of coming to Christ for spiritual fulfillment and the common reluctance to accept His invitation.

Scripture: Psalm 42:1, Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 11:28, John 4:14, John 5:40, John 6:35, John 6:37, John 7:37, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Spiritual Refreshment", "Faith In Christ"

Description

James Webster preaches on the powerful invitation of Jesus Christ to come and drink from Him, emphasizing the solemnity and urgency of the offer made during a feast day. Despite the great readiness of Christ to provide, many refuse to come to Him, rejecting the opportunity for spiritual refreshment. The sermon delves into the duty of believing in Christ, the types of individuals invited to come (thirsty folk), the promise of satisfaction for those who come, and the unfortunate reality that many are unwilling to accept Christ's offer.

Transcript

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." - John 7:37.

"And ye will not come to me." - John 5:40.

We have one of the sweetest offers ever Christ made, and ushered in with a great solemnity; the offer is made, not upon an ordinary day, but a feast day, and the greatest day of the feast. Not in the ordinary way of the doctors of the Jews' teaching, who sat when they taught, Jesus Christ stands to hold forth his great readiness to distribute what he was to offer. He does not speak in his ordinary way; he cries in the last day, the great day; he stands, he cries, he makes the offer. And what is the offer? If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. And the sad answer, that we may presume many of them gave him, is in the other part we have read, Ye will not come unto me. You may preach, you may cry Lord, you may stand and cry, but we will not come, we will have none of thee. In the words, we have first the duty incumbent on the audience, Come to me. I think the very voice should charm. It sounds like that in Canticles 4, Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon, look from the top of Amana, etc. Secondly, we have the persons that are allowed to come, that are ready to come, that are some way disposed for coming, and that are called here, and invited to come. It is thirsty folk: If any man be athirst, let him come unto me. Thirdly, we have the encouragement, He shall have drink, not have gold or silver, for a thirsty man cannot be satisfied with it; Lysimachus gave his whole kingdom for one drink of water, and he thought

himself much refreshed, and his life preserved by it. I will give you what you need, if ye come: If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Fourth, We have the entertainment that Christ's offer gets from the most of them, Ye will not come unto me.

For the First, the duty incumbent, Come unto me, by this is meant believing in Christ: He that comes unto me shall never hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst, John 6. They are taken for one and the same in Scripture: Come unto me you that are weary, that is, believe on me, to whom coming as unto a living stone, that is believing in Christ. There have been very many wrong notions of faith. The Church of Rome depresses its value, by making it a mere historical assent unto truth. They make it no better faith than what the reprobates and devils have. Our worthy Reformers running from that error fell into another, but not so dangerous. They make faith to be assurance and persuasion of the pardon of our sin. The Antinomians make faith the assurance of our eternal life, of God's electing love. The Socinians confound it with new obedience. Our church makes faith to be mainly an act of the will, a work of the heart going out upon an offered Jesus Christ: Come unto me, says he.

Secondly, We have here the persons invited: Any man that is athirst. Ye shall hear presently that the call is to the whole visible church. There is no limiting of the offer here to thirsty folk. I'll tell you who the thirsty are, folk that are scorched, and would have their desires satisfied, scorched with the wrath of God, parched with fiery temptations and afflictions, scorched with corruption. They are burnt, they are like to expire, they are gasping for a draught. These are thirsty folk, who desire satisfaction and cooling from Christ.

Thirdly, we have the encouragement, They shall have drink. There is in Christ a river that makes glad, that makes clean the city of God. Now they that come and thirst, they shall drink of that river that gusheth clear from beneath the throne of God. They shall partake of all the blessings of election, of all the purchase of redemption, of all the fruits of the Spirit. They shall drink, and drink again, a cup of the water of consolation pressed down, shaken together, heaped up and running over, and shall thirst no more. They drank the muddy stream before, and the more they drank their thirst increased and was the greater. Their thirst grew, and they cried give more, fill up again, and run the round of drinking of that cursed puddle. But says Christ, I shall give you the fountain, the never-failing source to drink of: If any many thirst, let him come to me.

Fourth, we have the entertainment Christ gets. Folk are unwilling: Ye will not come to me. Many under some exercise are sensible of their own impotence and inability, that they cannot come to Christ. But till folk be thoroughly convinced, they will never see themselves unwilling to come to Christ! O, say they, we would always have him, we would fain have him. Ye are mistaken, for the defect lies in the will. The will of man is the last fort, the last castle that holds out against Christ. The mind is conquered by illumination and conviction, and the conscience by challenges, and the affections by a warm motion and touch. But the will stands out to the last against him, Ye will not come to me.

Several textual questions I should give you here, before I come to the doctrine, but I shall run through them in a word. First, why does Christ here, and elsewhere, make faith to be the alone condition of the covenant of grace? He does not say, If any man thirst let him love me, let him repent, let him exercise new obedience, and then he shall have a drink. Indeed there is something of a congruity, even in the grace of faith itself, but it does not oblige God to make choice thereof before all the other graces to be the condition. There is a congruity in it. Faith is the hand that takes him, the mouth that receives him, and if we may speak with reverence, the stomach that concocts and digests the body of our Lord to spiritual

nourishment. There is an instrumentality in faith that is not to be found in any other grace.

Secondly, he makes faith the condition of the covenant, and nothing else, because faith gives God all the glory. It erects a high throne for Christ. Faith makes all the graces, like the twenty-four elders, throw down their crowns before the Lamb's throne, and say, Worthy, worthy, worthy is he. It says, and it makes all its companions say, Not to us, not to my gifts, not to my knowledge, not to my diligence, not to my free will, but to free, free grace, be all the praise, and therefore it is fit and very convenient, he make it the alone condition. They pervert the gospel who make works the condition of the covenant of grace, and confound the two covenants, and defeat God's great design of taking the creature wholly from off itself, and settling it upon a daysman: Let him come to me. Another textual question is, why says our Lord, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink? Why does he not say, If any man thirst, let him go to the river and drink, let him go to the waters? Folk must go first to Christ's person, before they can get good of his offices. Folk must make a direct address to the person of the mediator, before they reap his purchase. Pardon is sweet, adoption sweet, grace sweet, heaven sweet, but Christ is sweeter; and though they do not divide Christ and his benefits, they distinguish them, and it is a whorish heart which loves the ring better than the bridegroom, the gold watch better than the husband that gave it. We must come to the person of the mediator first, and make a direct address to him. And having him, ye have with him all things: Let him come unto me and drink.

Thirdly, there is this question, for further illustration, are there none invited to come but thirsty folk? It is a great mistake in many; when the gospel offer makes a condescension upon a qualification in the person, they make that a limitation of the offer, like that in Matt. 11:28: Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden! O, say they, here only the folk invited are the weary and heavy laden. It is a very great mistake. All the visible church are invited. The folk in Matthew 22 that had no appetite at all for the marriage feast, for the marriage drink, that were afterwards destroyed for not coming, were invited, as well as others. And if none but thirsty folk were invited, then they that are not thirsty not being invited, in their neglecting of Christ would not sin; their exceptions, their unbelief, might be excused, they might well say, No man has called us, no man has hired us, no man has obliged us. If folk be not called to come to Christ, they are not obliged to come, and if only thirsty folk were called, then all others would not be called, and so would not be obliged to accept of Christ. But some will say, Why then so often is the call made to such, and to no other? Why is there a condescension? I answer, though there be no limitation, yet a condescension is made for these reasons. First, if the call had been in general to come to him, the thirsty person would have said, Surely I am excepted out of the call, surely I am none that can come or can be welcome, such a burnt stick as I. Such a firebrand, and half consumed, and scorched with God's wrath, and a hell within me, can do nothing, surely he does not bid me come. Yea, says he, even the thirsty may come, the lamenter, the weary person, the longing body, so that it is a consolation, and to prevent the objection of poor lost things. Secondly, there is a condescension on the thirsty and others that they may come, because indeed no other will come. Though all should, no other will come: They that be whole need not the physician. If I should invite all (as I resolve to invite all, and every one of you, if there were witches, wizards, atheists among you, I am resolved to invite you all to come to Christ), yet none but thirsty persons will obey.

The observation I intend to prosecute is this: Though it be the duty of all in the visible church to come to and believe in Christ, yet many are unwilling; however, all who are thirsty shall certainly drink. All this we have in the texts read. First, it is the duty of all to come to Christ. Shortly take these proofs. First, consider what you are, and what Christ is, and ye will see it is a duty incumbent upon you. What am I, say ye? I'll

tell you what you are, you are prisoners of Satan, ye are children of hell, ye are heirs of wrath, ye are under the dominion and tyranny of the worst enemy in the world, and Christ is a strong redeemer. Ye are a fardle of folly and filthiness, a mixture of madness and wickedness, a composition of sin and sorrow. Ye are superlatively miserable, ye are next unto devils, the worst piece of God's creation, and ye are lost, lost by nature, lost by the sentence of the law, under the most insupportable vengeance of an angry God, and Christ is a strong Savior, able to save, ready to save. And is it not your duty then, to come to him?

Secondly, it cannot but be a duty to come to him, for it is but a return ye give for his coming to you. Hath he not come to you in a preached gospel? Hath he not come to you in providences? Every dispensation is a wagon wherein he comes to you. Has he not come to you in the sacrament? Has he not come in the flesh, when he flew from that warm bosom of God, where he had lien an entire eternity, to the womb of a woman, and from that unto a world of trouble, and thence to a cross, from the cross back to the throne again by a retrograde motion? Has he come to you, and will ye not give him a return and go to him?

Thirdly, it cannot but be our duty to believe in him, to come to him, for this is the counterpart of all that God and Christ hath been doing about us from all eternity! Our coming to Christ answers the covenant of redemption; it is a copy of that great transaction, it is a transcript of that blessed device, it answers his design of coming to a world. It is the counterpart of all, and the hearty acquiescing of the soul in all. Fourth, all things are designed and destined to bring you to Christ: These things are written that ye may believe on him. Why hear you preaching? It is to make you come. Why are there commands, why are there promises, why are there threatenings, why are there revelations? All is to drive you unto a Christ, to drive you from yourself unto the bosom of the high priest. And without you come, all means are to little purpose, they are to no purpose, they are to bad purpose. The communion itself will be your death, if ye come not to Christ. If ye come to a communion table, and come not to himself, ye may come to drink poison and get your death with it. All is in vain, all is lost, the pen of the scribe is in vain, praying, preaching, all is in vain.

Now as to the second, that though it be a duty incumbent upon all to come to Christ, yet many are unwilling: Ye will not come to me, says he. Strange, that such madness should ever be recorded. I have often compared this madness of the world, this unwillingness to come to Christ, to the mad rage of a desperate villain of an inveterate traitor against the government, that designed the ruin of all. He is brought to the scaffold, he is upon the ladder, the rope is about his neck, the napkin on his face, and then the king's eldest son is sent with a remission from his father. Hold thy hand, executioner. Let not the panel go over. Here my father's indemnity. Aye, but the man hates so much the king and his son, that he cries, Throw me over, I will have none of his indemnities. Ye will not come to me that ye may have life. The world is ruined, the world is destroyed; I offer my remission, I send my own son with it; we will have none of it, we will rather die than have it that way.

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