

How to Prepare for the Meeting

by Samuel Logan Brengle

To experience the presence and power of Jesus, we must seek Him with perseverance, humility, and a believing heart.

Scripture: Luke 2:43

Topics: "Seeking God's Presence", "Spiritual Preparedness"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the necessity of actively seeking the presence of Jesus in our gatherings, using the story of Mary and Joseph losing Jesus in Jerusalem as a metaphor for how people often assume His presence without truly inviting Him. He recounts a camp meeting where the absence of Jesus led to a lack of spiritual power until the attendees earnestly sought Him, resulting in a transformative experience filled with healing and joy. Brengle warns against complacency in faith, urging believers to ensure Jesus is personally present in their lives and meetings, rather than taking it for granted. He highlights that true spiritual success comes from a humble and constant relationship with Christ, as exemplified by Moses. The sermon concludes with a call to seek Jesus diligently, assuring that He will be found by those who earnestly search for Him.

Transcript

A long time ago, St. Luke tells us when Jesus was a boy of twelve, He went with His parents and neighbors up to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover. On the return of the company, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem. 'And Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance and found Him not' (Luke ii. 43-45).

Their mistake was in taking it for granted that Jesus was in the company. Joseph knew He was not with him, and Mary knew He was not with her, and the kinsfolks and acquaintances knew He was not with them, and yet each took it for granted that He was in the company with someone else. But lo! when they sought Him, they found Him not; He was not there.

Just so, frequently in meetings and conventions the people all suppose Jesus is in the company, and yet there may not be one that is personally conscious of His presence. They take it for granted that He is with someone else, and lo! He may not be in their midst at all. He has not been perseveringly, importunately, humbly and believingly sought for and invited to come, and so He has stayed behind.

I remember a number of years ago going to a camp meeting hoping to find Jesus there in power. I got there two or three days after the opening, and I found, if I now remember rightly, that no one had been saved. There was no grip and power in the meetings. At the appointed hour for the meeting, the bell would ring and the officers and soldiers who had been laughing and joking and singing songs, and visiting with each other and making merry generally, would come strolling into the meetings with smiles on their faces and 'God bless you' on their tongues, but with apparently no solemn consciousness of the holy presence of the Crucified One in their midst. Then the meeting would begin with a rush and a bang, and songs and prayers and jokes and laughter and collection and smart testimonies, and a Bible reading would follow, and the meeting would end again without souls. Everybody would go out good-naturedly, make a rush for the best seats at the dinner-table, and enjoy themselves beautifully until the next meeting.

Everyone seemed to take it for granted that Jesus was in the company, yet no one seemed to be specially conscious of His Presence.

At last it was pointed out that the meetings were galloped through but no souls were saved, and it was suggested that perhaps Jesus was missing. A prayer meeting was called to look for Jesus, and some of the people present had to allow that Jesus was not with them. Then some of them went to their tents to look for Jesus, and some went to the woods and got down on their knees to look for Him, and would not give up the search until at last, bless Him, He was found. And when He was told that He was expected and that He must come, and that we would not let Him go except He blessed us, then He came. Then there was a shout of a King in the camp, and He gave us a touch of His baptism, which is with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

The officers, soldiers and saints got awfully in earnest, and the poor sinner got awfully alarmed and convicted so that they were no longer anxious about what they should have for dinner. And some seemed so anxious to talk with Jesus and get filled with His Spirit, and His great thoughts, and to get Him to put the dynamite of the Holy Ghost into their testimonies and songs and prayers, that they lost their appetites, and did not care whether they had any dinner at all, if only they could be fed with bread from Heaven.

Oh, I tell you, it was wonderful the transformation that came over that camp ground when Jesus got there! The shallow joy that caused men to smile and make an empty racket, gave way before that deep joy of the Lord which makes men weep and be serious and fills their faces with the solar light of Heaven, and makes their shout almost as terrible to the wicked as will be the trumpet peals and awful thunders of the Judgment Day.

I tell you the presence of Jesus in the power of the Holy Ghost on that camp ground did make the remaining days of the camp meeting into veritable Judgment Days for some folks. Then the news went abroad that Jesus was in the camp, and the people poured in from all the country round about, and mighty things were done in His name. Weak folks were made strong. Timid folks became bold as lions. Broken hearts were healed. Sad folks were made into glad folks. The lame man leaped as a hart. The blind saw. The deaf heard. The dumb spake. The hungry multitudes were fed. Spirits that were full of passion and like a storm-tossed sea, became peaceful and calm. And dead souls were raised to life! Glory to God!

I tell you it was the presence of Jesus that saved that camp meeting from being recorded as a dismal failure, and instead caused it to be remembered as a time of wondrous refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

Now Jesus is ready and willing to go up to every camp meeting and convention and council and indoor and outdoor meeting all over the world, and to make His personal presence felt by every saint and soldier, but each one must seek Him as Moses did. God had set Moses to the tremendous task of ruling a mob of ignorant Israelites just rescued from centuries of hard bondage, and leading them through a barren, mountainous wilderness, to the promised land, where they would meet armed hosts, strongly entrenched in fortified cities. The burden was too heavy for Moses, and he cried out to God: 'If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? . . . And the Lord said unto Moses: I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name. My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest ' (Exod. xxxlii. 15, 16, 17, 14).

I do not wonder any longer at the mighty things Moses did. If God goes with a man and tells him what to do and how to do it, and gives him the wisdom and strength with which to do it, then there is nothing too hard for that man. God becomes a servant of that man as much as that man is the servant of God. They are co-workers. One man like that can chase a thousand, and if he find a fellow, the two shall put ten thousand to flight. Bless God!

But Jesus is holy and humble and He cannot walk with any but humble holy men, so, my brother, if you want Him to go with you, you must humble yourself and be holy. Moses was the meekest of men, we read.

Then, too, if we want Jesus to go with us to the meeting, we must invite Him home with us after the meeting. He will not come to the meeting and walk back with us to our door, if when we get there we find it in our hearts to bid Him good-night and close the door in His face, and go in and scold the wife and children and talk about our neighbors and forget what manner of spirit we are of. Our walk with Him must be constant, not fitful, else we will seek for Him some day and not find Him.

Oh, that we may always make sure that He is with us, and not take it for granted, else we find we have been going on a fool's errand without Him! Poor Joseph and Mary lost five days and had no one knows how much anxiety and heartache, all because they supposed Jesus was in the company, but did not make sure. But, bless God, after diligent search they found Him! Is He with you now, my brother? If He is not, then get your Bible and go off alone and seek Him, and if you wake up and seek Him with all your heart, He will be found of you.

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