

'Jesus christ... Both Their Lord and Ours'

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes that the church is as big as Jesus Christ and that we should take the common ground of Christ, making Him everything in our lives, both now and in heaven.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 4:4

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Preparation for Heaven"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the unity of believers in Christ, highlighting that Jesus is both their Lord and ours, transcending divisions among Christians. He reflects on the significance of gathering together in love, reminding the congregation that the true essence of their fellowship is rooted in Christ's love. Sparks warns against the tendency to make Jesus smaller than He is, urging believers to focus on Christ rather than their differences. He encourages the audience to prepare for heaven by fostering love and unity among neighbors, as they will all share the same street in the New Jerusalem. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper commitment to making Christ central in their lives, both now and in the life to come.

Transcript

Dear friends, it is not my intention to keep you very long. Indeed, I think I shall not say much to you this evening, but there is one thing I must say. How very grateful I am for the opportunity that this love feast has given me. It has given me the opportunity to meet so many of my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. I am not conceited enough to think that this love feast has been arranged because I have come to the Philippines. But I do think it is a very great blessing that so many of us can come together like this. Perhaps many of us would not meet at this time were it not for this opportunity. So, I thank my brothers here for making this provision. If you had told me when I was speaking here last night that over seven hundred people would be gathered around the tables in this hall, I think I should have had difficulty in believing it. And what a wonderful feast it has been, but there is something more wonderful than the crowd, and there is something more wonderful than the feast. It is the love of Christ which is in every heart in this hall tonight.

When I was thinking and praying about this time this evening, and asking the Lord for just a little word to give you, there came into my heart the first words of Paul, in the First Letter to the Corinthians, I will just read those words to you. "Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their Lord

and ours." It is the last part of that verse which is very much in my heart, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their Lord and ours." I think the Apostle Paul was a very wise man. He was a very clever man, and in these two verses, that cleverness comes out. You notice he begins by addressing the church of God which is in Corinth. Now the Corinthians had a great gift of division. Later on the apostle would say there are divisions among you. And their divisions were marked by their circling round different men. One group said, "We are of Paul"; another group said, "We are of Apollos"; another group said, "We are of Peter"; so they were people who are very much marked by divisions. It was to those people and to those divisions, that the apostle said this, "To all that in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus, their Lord and ours."

How big is the church? It is just as big as Jesus Christ. The trouble with the Corinthians was that they were making Jesus much smaller than He really is. So the apostle, right at the beginning, said: No, Jesus is bigger than all the groups put together. To all those in every place who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus, their Lord and ours.

Divisions are always the result of making Jesus smaller than He is. Our Lord Jesus is greater than men. We have a hymn which has a line like this, 'The love of God is greater than the measure of men's mind.' We are always making God, and the love of God, about the size of our own mind. And if people do not agree with our mind, that is where the love of God stops with us. We, here tonight, represent many groups. Perhaps we have our own mind about things, but if this feast really lives up to its name, it represents something much bigger than our mind. We are not gathered to men or a man. No man for us can measure Christ. We are here tonight because this is a true love feast. And that means that the love of Christ is in our heart. We left our groups. We left our divisions. We are here on the common ground of Christ. What a grand thing it would be if all Christians just took that ground! The ground of so many Christians, the ground of some denominations, some organizations, some special teaching, or many different things, that is their ground. But the real ground of the Christian is Christ. If we all had a greater concern for the Lord Jesus than we had for religious things, what a different thing it would be in the world.

Now, I expect you all agreed with that. You agreed with it in theory, but you know this is very practical. To live next door to some people is a very practical matter. It just finds you out, does it not? How you get on with your neighbor. Now, there is another thing that you will all agree with in theory. It is that this life is a preparation for heaven. You believe that? You would say that you are on your way to heaven. And you expect one day to be there. And you will agree that this present life is a preparation for heaven. Do you really believe that? Because it is very practical. We are all going to be neighbors in heaven. We are all going to live next door to each other. Do you remember that there is a description of the New Jerusalem at the end of the Bible?

I am afraid that the people who have written our hymns have gone astray on this. There is a hymn which says this, 'The streets, I am told, are paved with pure gold.' That is false doctrine. In the Bible, it says there is only one street. Only one street in the New Jerusalem. That one street is of gold. Dear friends, we will all get to live on the same street in heaven. We are all going to be neighbors there. If it is to be taken literally, we shall not be able to get out of our houses without meeting everybody in heaven.

Someone came over to England from America once; they had traveled on the same boat as we had. They had never been to England before. We got into the train to go from the port to London. This person saw all the long rows of houses joined together and she looked shocked at this. 'Look at all the houses joined together. How do you get on if you do not like your neighbor?'

In heaven there is one street. It is paved with pure gold. Now I do not think we are to take that literally. I think it is symbolic, and is meant to teach us two things. (1) We are all going to be in the closest fellowship in heaven. And (2) the gold is the symbol of the love of God. We are all going to be together in the love of God.

Now I said you believe that this life is the preparation for heaven. Do you believe it? You had better begin to know how to live with your neighbor now. I mean your Christian neighbor. All those in every place who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus.

What is going to be the chief characteristics of heaven? It says that Christ will be all in all. Will the characteristics of heaven be the Christ of everything? Not things, not institutions, but just Christ. If it is going to be like that, then we had better begin to make Christ everything now. If we are going to have anything as a foretell of heaven in this life, it will only be just as Christ is more than anything and everything else. So our daily prayers must be, 'Lord, prepare me for heaven, and do it by filling me with more and more of Christ.' Do take these words of the Apostle Paul, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their Lord and ours." The Lord bless you all, dear friends.

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