

## Christmas — Without Christ

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our Redeemer seeks, the wonderful inn of the soul. I want to look inside that inn, for it has many rooms, housing many varied interests, and we may exclude the Lord from them all. Let us walk through a few of the rooms.

There is first of all the room of the mind, the busy realm of the understanding. Try to imagine the multitude of thoughts that throng that room in a single day. From waking moment to the return of sleep they crowd its busy floors. There they are, thoughts innumerable, hurrying, jostling, coming, going! And yet in all the restless, tumultuous assembly, with the floor never empty, the Lord may have no place. "God is not in all his thoughts." There is no room in the inn. He is crowded out.

And here is another room, the room of personal affection and desire. It is the room where love lives and sings. And it is the room where love droops and sickens and dies. It is the room where impulse is born, and where it grows or faints. It is the room where secret longing moves shyly about and only occasionally shows itself at the window. It is the busy chamber of the emotions. And the Lord yearns to enter this carefully guarded room, to make His home in the realm of waking and brooding affection. Is there any room for Him?

Let us pass into another room in the inn. I will call it the room of the imagination. It is the radiant chamber of ideals and fancies and visions and dreams. In this room we may find Prospect Window and the Window of Hope. It is here that we look out upon the morrow. And it is here that life's wishes and plans may be found. The Lord delights to abide in that bright chamber of purpose and dream. Is there any room?

Not far from this room there is another which I will call the chamber of mirth. It is here that the genius of merriment dwells, and here you may find the sunny presence of wit and humour. Here are quip and jest and jollity. Here is where bridal joy is found and where the song of the vineyard is born. Will the Master turn into this room, or will He avoid it? I warrant He longs for a place in the happy crowd! Is there any room for Him in this hall of mirth, or is He crowded out?

There are many other rooms in this inn that I could name. There is the conversation room, that busy room of speech and intercourse. Is the Lord permitted to enter into that room and have any influence upon the fellowship? There is the recreation room, the room used in the hours of leisure, when business is laid aside and we are at play. Is the Master permitted to play with us? Has He any voice or veto in the matter and manner of the games? Or is there no room for Him? Is He crowded out?

I have thought it well just to turn into some of the rooms in this famous inn, in order that it may become clear to us that Christ's experience in the first Christmas may be repeated in more tragic form today. The Lord may still be crowded out, and there may be no room for Him where most He wants to be.

### WHY OUTSIDE?

Now why do we shut Him out? Well, there are many reasons, but I will select two or three which perhaps are the most common. First of all, we may keep Him out because we should not care for Him to see what there is within. I mean that we do not care to consciously meet Him inside the inn. It troubles us and disturbs us to think about Him. The only way in which some people can find even comparative comfort is to forget the Lord. There are some things which become startlingly vivid if He gets in and we begin to think about Him. And it seems as though the only way to recover our ease is to get Him

out again as soon as we can. Sometimes He gets in for a moment, and He makes strange confusion. We begin to see the unholy pattern of our life, and we are dismayed by the vision. If the Lord's knockings bring our sins to view, how will it be if He gets in? And so our very sins make us shut the door and keep it closed, and there is no room for Him in the inn.

Then again we may keep Him out by the thronging multitude of our cares. We can be so full of care as to be quite careless about Him. We can have so much to worry about that we have no time to think about Christ. "The cares of this world . . . choke the word," and the Speaker of the word is forgotten. Yes, we may entertain so many cares that the Lord cannot get in at the door. And yet all the time the gracious promise is waiting, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

In the third place, we may crowd the Saviour out of the inn by the multitude of pleasures which we are entertaining as our guests. That is to say, a merely sensational life can make us numb to all that is spiritual, and the unseen world becomes nonexistent to our souls. That is an awful law of life. We may so dwell in the pleasures of the senses that all the deeper things are as though they were dead, and buried in forgotten graves.

For instance, you would certainly think that the Lord of glory could not be crowded out of a wedding, that solemn and sacred experience in human life. But He can! Of course we may mention His name, but the meaning is too often only a conventional courtesy, while the Lord Himself is relegated to the yard. We may be engrossed with the sensations of the event, with the glittering externals, with the dresses and the orange blossoms, while the holy Christ, upon whom the lasting joy and peace and blessedness of the wedded pair will utterly depend, is absolutely forgotten.

It is not needful to name any further reasons for our exclusion of the Lord from the rooms of the soul. I think we all clearly see that Holman Hunt's great picture, *The Light of the World*, depicts an ever recurring spiritual tragedy. You remember the picture. The Lord stands outside the door, at night, among the chilling dews, and beneath the cold light of the moon, and He is knocking, knocking! And the door has been so long closed that weeds have clambered about it, and even the very flowers

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## BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO



REV. MRS. H. C. SANDERS, wife of the late Dr. H. C. Sanders, who celebrates her 90th birthday Dec. 28th.

Congratulations and sincere good wishes are extended Mrs. Sanders on this very wonderful occasion.