

AMEN!

I cannot say,
Beneath the pressure of life's cares to-day,
I joy in these;
But I can say
That I had rather walk this rugged way,
If him it please.

That all is well, when darkening clouds conceal
The shining sun;
But then, I know
He lives and loves; and say, since it is so
Thy will be done.

In happy tones; the tear-drops on my cheek
Show I am sad;
But I can speak
Of grace to suffer with submission meek,
Until made glad.

I do not see
Why God should e'en permit some things to be,
When he is love;
But I can see,
Tho' often dimly through the mystery,
His hand above!

I do not know
Where falls the seed that I have tried to sow
With greatest care;
But I shall know
The meaning of each waiting hour below,
Sometime, somewhere!

I do not look
Upon the present, nor in Nature's book,
To read my fate;
But I do look
For promised blessings in God's Holy book;
And, I can wait.

I may not try
To keep the hot tears back—but hush that sigh,
"It might have been,"
And try to still
Each rising murmur, and to God's sweet will
Respond, "Amen!"

—Words of Life.

Visitor Pulpit.

DINING WITH JESUS.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"Come and dine."—John 21: 12.

That is better; that is closer, nearer, dearer and more substantial than "Come and see"; that may be done at a distance, though "come" seems to invite us to make the distance, less. But "Come and dine"—that implies the same table, the same meat; yea, and sometimes it means to sit side by side and lean our heads upon the Saviour's bosom. Here is nearness familiar and domestic—"Come and dine." Understand that while we are sinners, faith brings us into a justified state by simply looking to Christ, though the soul has had no enjoyment of him; but after believing, faith then assists us really to enjoy Christ.

I know some of you are wishing and expecting to enjoy Christ first, and believe him afterwards. I would correct your error. You must take God's mercies in their order and season; and you will not find "Come and dine" in the first chapter of John—there it is, "Come and see." Believe Jesus first, and you shall feed on him afterwards. Certain of you seem to me to be content to believe in Christ, and to say, "I am safe," without wishing to know the blessed enjoyment which is found in him. It should not be so. You are not to be content with the first chapter of John, but go on to the last, and be not satisfied so long as there is a "yet" beyond. If you have seen Christ; if you have touched Christ; if you have put your fingers into the print of the nails, be not satisfied till you know the meaning of the text, "Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood, there is no life in him." "Come and dine," then, implies greater enjoyment than "Come and see." "Come and see," gives peace, but "Come and dine," gives ecstasy, rapture—what shall I call it? It gives heaven on earth, for it gives Christ. "Come and dine" must be experimentally understood before you can read the book of Solomon's Songs with profit. "Come and see" can read the evangelists; may wander delightfully through the book of Psalms; may enrich itself with Proverbs; but the tree of life, which is in the midst of the garden—that is, the book of Canticles—is not to be eaten of except by those who have heard the Master say, "Come and dine." I would to God that all the Lord's people were not merely delivered from the chains of sin and washed in the Saviour's blood, but brought into the banqueting house, where waves the banner of redeeming love. There is more enjoyment, then, in the one than in the other, and there is also more nearness. When I first believed, in Christ I felt a distance between myself and him, and the only nearness that I could get was to lay my hand upon his head and confess my sin;

but I hope, some of us, after a few years of believing, know what it is to sit at his feet with Mary, to lean upon his bosom with John—aye, and to say with the spouse, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." O beloved, there is a nearness to Christ which the worldling can only laugh at if he should hear us talk of it. Read "Rutherford's Letters," and you get a glimpse of what it is to dine with Christ. Turn to "Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions;" or even, if you will, wander amidst the quaint rhymes and sweet poetry of dear George Herbert; there you have "Come and dine" carried out in sweetest poetry. Oh, to get so close to Christ, that you can sing with a modern hymn writer:

"So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the person of his Son
I am as near as he!

"So dear, so very dear to God,
I cannot dearer be;
The love wherewith he loves his Son
Such is his love for me!"

This is a high attainment, but rest not satisfied till you have gained it. Yet, once more, "Come and dine" gives us a vision of union with Jesus, because the only meat that we can eat when we dine with Christ is himself. We do not provide the supper. When he dined on that occasion with his disciples, Peter dragged a net full of fishes out of the sea; but when they came to the shore they found a fire ready kindled, and fish laid thereon, so that the fish they ate did not come out of the sea by their net, at any rate. Christ found the fish and lit the fire and found the bread, and then said, "Come and dine." Ah! and the fire that warms our heart when we have fellowship with him comes from himself, and the fish that we eat is his own, and the wine that we drink flows from his own heart. Oh, what union is this! It is a depth that reason cannot fathom, that we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ. Here we stand and look, and look, and look, and though the water is as clear as crystal, like the sea of glass before the Throne of God, yet to the bottom of it angelic ken can never reach. One with Jesus—by eternal union one. What does this mean believer

"One when he died; one when he rose;
One when he triumphed o'er his foes,
One when in heaven he took his seat,
And angels sang of hell's defeat."

Canst thou comprehend it?

"This covenant stands secure,
Though earth's old columns bow;
The strong, the feeble, and the weak
Are one in Jesus now."

"Oh, sacred union, firm and strong,
How great the grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be
One with incarnate Deity!"

And yet it is so, and he who has listened to the Saviour's voice, "Come and dine," knows it to be so, and rejoices therein.

In this, also, you find an invitation to enjoy fellowship with the saints. You are not to eat your morsel alone, but in company. We sit down in heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and no small part of the hereafter bliss is connected with the fellowship which exists amongst the saints in glory. So also with our present feasting on the fat things full of marrow which Christ spreads before his chosen ones. We enjoy the company as well as the feast, and find our happiness augmented by the society of kindred minds. The Supper of the Lord is the table of communion, not only with the Master, but also with all who love him in sincerity and truth. One of the surest ways of introducing discord into the midst of a church is for the minister to starve the people. Hungry men are sure to be quarrelsome, and, on the contrary, to unite a flock in closest bonds of love, let the minister say, "Come in and dine;" and then put before them the finest of the wheat, honey out of the rock, and wine upon the lees well refined. If you would have sweetest fellowship with each other, live on Christ, enter into the banqueting house, sit beneath the banner of love, and you will find that sacred commingling of spirit with spirit which will prove that you are one in Jesus Christ. Christians may differ on a variety of points, they may not see eye to eye on this thing and on that, but they have all one spiritual appetite, and if we cannot all feel alike,

we can all feed alike on the bread of life sent down from heaven. Get nearer to Christ, and eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, and you will find yourself linked more and more in spirit to all who are like yourself, supported by the same heavenly manna. We do not expect to see all Christians agreeing, but we are sure that one of the most likely plans for cultivating a brotherly spirit is to listen to Christ's words, "Come and dine."

We can see, moreover in these words, the foundation of the Christian's growth and progress in spiritual things. To see Christ is to begin the Christian's life, but to grow in grace we must "Come and dine." The early history of the first disciples is, by no means, satisfactory. They were, evidently, only babes in spiritual things. How little they seemed to comprehend the Saviour's mission; He has to say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" They misunderstood the nature of his kingdom, and were continually displaying a carnal and selfish spirit. It is evident that the early dawn of spiritual life is all they had then received. They had seen Jesus, they loved him and followed him even unto trial and disgrace, but yet they were far from possessing the Spirit of Christ. Now, after they had reached this state of living on Christ, they became new men. It is no longer mere sight, but an inward appropriation of Christ Jesus by faith, and the consequences are manifest; they are seen developing themselves under the blessed outpouring of the Holy Ghost into workmen that needed not to be ashamed. They endured hardness as good soldiers of the cross. They fought a good fight, and they finished their course with joy. A higher order of life is clearly theirs. They have risen in the scale of spiritual existence. A clearer light shines around them, and they have manifestly grown in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Beloved, we long for your edification, we covet for you the best gifts, and therefore we say, "Come and dine." Many Christians remain stunted and dwarfed in spiritual things, so as to present the same appearance year after year. No upspringing of thought or feeling is manifest in them. They exist but do not grow. The reason is evident, but they are not taking of Christ, and they neglect to appropriate to themselves the blessing which he is waiting to bestow.

Why should you rest content with being in the tender green blade when you can go on and reach the ear, and eventually, the full corn in the ear? I would that all God's servants were more in earnest to develop that good thing which has been implanted in them by the Holy Ghost. It is all very well to keep other men's vineyards, but you must not neglect your own. Why should it ever be winter-time in our hearts? We must have our seed-time, it is true, but oh, for a spring time—yea, a summer season, which shall give promise of an early harvest. Now, if you would ripen in grace you must live near Christ—in his presence—basking in the sunshine of his smiles. You must hold sweet communion with him. You must leave the distant view of His face and come near, as did John, and pillow your head on his breast. Then you will find yourself advancing in holiness, in love, in faith, in hope—yea, in every godly life. What a joy it is to see men daily living on Christ. You may watch them grow, as you have watched the flowers and the trees in the gardens expanding under the genial showers and sunshine of the last few weeks. It robs a death of its terrors to see the aged Christian rapidly preparing for glory, but I would rather the man grew before he was about to be taken from us, so that we might be the better for his expanded graces, and enjoy his beauty of holiness a few years here on earth. We do not grudge the saints in glory anything, but it would be a mercy to us if Christians would try and get as much of perfection and maturity as possible a few years sooner, so as to gladden our eyes with some bright blossoms, as well as the sombre green blades. It is all very well, the fresh verdure in early spring, but I like

also the russet hues of autumn, and the rich clusters of the vintage, with the songs of the reaper and the shout of "harvest home." The golden grain is a goodly and pleasant thing to see, as the field waves in the autumn breeze. So, also, I like to mark maturity in Christ's fields, as well as in the earthly ones. It is a glorious sight, an experienced saint; a man who has been much with Jesus, and learned of him; who has caught the Master's Spirit, and reflects it brightly to all around.

We notice one more thought, and then must conclude:

Here is preparation for service. "Come and dine" says the Master; but before the feast is concluded, he says to Peter, "Feed my lambs;" and again, "Feed my sheep;" further adding, "Follow me." All the strength supplied by Christ is for service, and for use in his vineyard. When the prophet Elijah found the cake baked on the coals, and the cruise of water placed at his head as he lay under the juniper tree, he had a commission to go forty days and forty nights on the strength of it, journeying toward Horeb, the mount of God. So also with us. We eat so as to be able to expend our strength in the Master's service. We come to the passover, and eat of our paschal lamb with loins girt, and with our staff in our hands, so as to start off at once when we have satisfied our spirits. Some Christians are for living on Christ, but are not so anxious to live for Christ. Now, I rejoice to know that I can spend and be spent for the Lord, and I find in that labor for Christ, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." I never feel so like to the Master as when I go about trying to do good. Heaven is the place where saints feast most and work most. They sit down at the table of our Lord, and they serve him day and night in his temple. They eat of heavenly food and render perfect service. Now, earth should be a preparation for heaven: come and dine, and then go and labor. Freely ye receive, freely give; gather up the fragments of your feast, and go and carry it to Lazarus at the gate; yea, rather carry the loaves and fishes to others, as did the disciples, when the Lord had multiplied their little store, to satisfy the thousands who were famishing for want of food.

We have yet to learn more concerning the design of our Lord in giving us his grace. We are not to hold the precious grains of truth like a mummy does the wheat, for ages, without giving it a chance of growing. No, feed yourself, and then forth and bid others come and eat and drink; go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that there may be many more rejoicing with you in the light and life of Christ. Why does the Lord send down the rain upon the thirsty earth, and give the sunshine and the genial refreshing breeze? Is it not that these may all help the fruits of the earth to yield food for man and beast? Even so the Lord calls us into enjoyment and feasting, that we may afterwards go out to labor and service. My dear hearers, I ever seek to see you fruitful in all good works, to do his will who provides for us all things richly to enjoy. You are aware that herein is our Father glorified; if we bring forth much fruit, so shall we be his disciples. Eat then; spare not; you are welcome to as much as you can consume, but when you have eaten of the fat, and drunk of the sweet, go and tell of it to sinners round, that the starving may come and find "wine and milk, without money and without price." You are to preach the gospel to every creature—proclaim the good news of water from the rock Christ Jesus, which flows in the midst of the world's wilderness, so that all may drink and live. Tell of the finest of the wheat on which you have feasted. Bid the prodigal to leave the hanks which the swine do eat, and return to the Father's house, there to eat of the fatted calf, and feast at the parental board. Tell him there is room in the Saviour's heart, and never cease till you can no longer speak, proclaiming his matchless love and power, and his willingness to say to all, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Come and dine."

RESPONSIBILITY.

If there is within your house, within your sphere, one sleeping soul which you could awake, and yet allow to sleep on you will be held responsible. I do not say for the entire loss of that soul, but at least for not awakening him. There is need for this lesson. A contrary doctrine has been making way, and especially in educated society, for some time—the doctrine of reticence in spiritual things. It is supposed that in proportion as men are educated, they become silent and secret from all their fellows in their whole religious experience. It is hinted that it would be scarcely less than a breach of politeness and religious propriety to mention the soul, the Saviour, the God of salvation. It seems to me that if that theory be true, when human perfection is reached here or in heaven, God might as well not be, for He will never be named again. So you see the ideal heaven of those men would come to be exactly what our fallen and miserable state now is—a state of estrangement from God, and of cold and selfish isolation, even from one another.—Dr. Raleigh.

BY THEIR WORKS.

As Christ was the Bread of Life, so are his Apostles and ministers the breakers and dispensers of that Bread. They can give no such proof that they wield an Apostolic ministry as when they feed men's souls. If they are true Apostles, not by man but by the Holy Ghost, if they have the divine commission that cometh from above, if through them as chosen instruments, the Divine Spirit exercises its dominion in the souls of men, they will see repeated around them the miracle of feeding the great multitude. Their words may be, indeed, no more than five barley loaves and two small fishes, yet if vivified and distributed by the Holy Spirit, they will suffice often to feed five thousand, and still none be sent empty away. To feed and nourish the spiritual life is, then, the great end for which the ministry is instituted; and the ministry which does not fulfil this end, must be regarded as a failure.—Prof. Diman.

LYMAN BEECHER'S ILLUSTRATION.

"Young gentlemen," said Dr. Beecher, pausing in the midst of a lecture on the Divine Decrees, and raising his spectacles over his forehead in a way he had when some extemporaneous thought struck him. "Theology is a mighty deep. It has its calms and its storms, its joys and its dangers. Many and weak souls some strong ones are wrecked because they venture too far without taking the proper bearings. I go out myself, sometimes, but I try to be careful. I walk along the shores and pick out some sturdy old stump of a doctrine, which has stood there firmly for thousands of years and never pulled out. I make fast to that, and so, when I miss my footing I haul on the line. I don't know where I am, but I know where that stump is. I settled that point before I started."

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