

Jesus Stood in the Midst of Them

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In the book of Luke, the 24th chapter, and verse 36, Luke 24:36. And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, peace be unto you. As they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, peace be unto you.

Now into the world of complex religious observations, a sort of religious jungle where though the sun shone brightly, it was prevented from being affected by the very multiplicity of duties and rituals and observations laid upon the people. And into the midst of all this came the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and He shone brightly there. He was to be God's salvation. He was to be God's cure, the cure for all that was wrong with the human race. And He came to deliver us from our moral and spiritual disorders. For the moment we'll not mention that He came also to deliver us from our physical world in that day when our Lord comes and our bodies are glorified. And mainly He came to deliver us from our moral and spiritual disorders.

And then He came to deliver us also from our remedies. One of the heaviest burdens that has ever been laid upon the human race is religious burden. And it is a self-medicating burden. It is an effort on the part of men who are conscious of their moral and spiritual disorders, to medicate themselves and get better by their own treatment.

One of the outstanding, as preachers say, outstanding examples of course, is that in India where pilgrims go like an inchworm, falling flat face down on the ground, marking where their forehead is, and then putting their foot where their forehead was, and inching again, and thus traveling clear to the river Ganga, the Ganges River, Mother Ganga, they call her, and washing themselves there. And there have been those who have fasted until they were thin and with spikes in their shoes and have hidden themselves in caves. Everything has been tried down to the present hour, to try to medicate, try to treat ourselves. You know how it is out in the world, down past the last thousands of years, they have tried a little of everything to cure themselves, men have of various diseases.

I remember when I was a lad that there was a story that if you were to take a, you had a wart, unseemly wart on your hand and you wanted to get rid of it and who wouldn't? You were to take hair from a horse's tail, wrap it around the thing, and then at a certain time, I think the dark of the moon or something, you were to take it out and bury it where the water dripped off of the house. Then when it had rotted, your wart left. And the funny part about it was, they did. And I don't understand of course. The only thing I can see is that a wart must be psychologically-caused and

that was a psychological cure. But that's only one of the many things. And I remember taking things when I was a boy that never should have been fed to anybody. But my old German grandmother and my country people, they fed you anything, you know, down through the years if you were to study it up a little, you would find there's scarcely anything that flies, swims, crawls, or grows, or just is, that hasn't been powdered and fed to somebody to try to cure them of their diseases.

The great old English bard kidded the public about it in that passage where he talks about the charm, you remember the medicine that would heal anything he says, eye of newt and the toe of a frog and wool of a bat and a tongue of a dog, adders fork and blind worm sting and lizard leg and a owlet's wing. Add there too a tiger's chandran for the ingredient of the cauldron. Cool it with a baboon's blood and then your medicine is firm and good. Well, that's supposed to be very funny, but it's not funny really because it's a fair description of what's been fed to people during the years to try to cure them of their diseases.

And the same thing is true in religion. We have invented almost everything under the sun to try to cure us. But the cure had already come. Jesus Christ had come. And He had not come to launch a new religion. Kindly remember, Christianity is not a new religion. They didn't come to launch a new or better or finer religion. He came Himself to be their religion. He came himself to be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth. He did not come to delegate power to others, so that others could heal or cure or bless. He came to be the blessing. He was Himself that. It was not through a system of which He was the head. Christianity is not a system with Jesus Christ, the head of the system. Jesus Christ is everything. And He by direct and personal and intimate touch with the human soul and mind, He was to deliver them.

Now that's shown throughout the entire Bible. That's not my interpretation. It says, look unto Me and be ye saved. And God said of His Son Jesus, Thou shalt be My salvation. Thou shalt be my salvation unto the ends of the earth. And it says, thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin. And it says, the old man of God who had waited around the temple, when he saw the baby Jesus, took Him up in his arms, held Him, and looked down at Him and said as he raised now his eyes to heaven, let Thy servant depart in peace. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.

So, I say to you that are in doubt or you that are not instructed or you that are not sure that it is Jesus Christ Himself that Christianity offers to you. Now I know the churches are all confused because of the introduction of human ideas, as if this self-medication idea has raised up a great, vast toadstool. This, this huge mustard tree has grown up. But really, all Christianity offers is Jesus Christ the Lord. It offers that and that is all that needs to be offered, for He is enough. And your relation to Jesus Christ is really all that matters in this life.

Now, that is both good news and bad news. It is good news for those who have met our Savior and who know Him intimately and personally. It is bad news for those who hope to get into heaven some other way. Some of this self-medication business, this wool of a bat and tongues of a dog kind of religion that we create. And we write books about it, and get it into our church minutes and it gets on our books. And the first thing you know, we're trusting to those things. And people have this or that done to them. They're always inventing something, where down over the centuries, something to do to somebody. They wanted to do something to them, run and do something to their bodies, forgetting that Jesus, our Lord, said, don't worry about your body, but about him that can kill the body. Think about your soul and the one who can destroy your soul in hell.

The human body is the tabernacle in which a man lives. You might as well rub liniment on the outside of your brick house to try to cure the bursitis in your elbow and on the inside as to put anything on a man's body and try to cure his soul. You can't do that. You can't help a man's soul by manipulating his body. But we've got all sorts of manipulations and manipulators. But Jesus stood in the midst and He was their everything and their all, and He still is. So that's good news for this sin-tired, good news for the defeated, good news for the fatigued and morally distressed, good news for the those who are afraid, good news for those who know their own pollution. Good news, for He shall be called Jesus, for He shall deliver people from their sins.

Now it says here that this Jesus stood in the midst of them and said, peace be unto you. Now this explains the angels' words, peace on earth, goodwill to men. The angel could only say that because Jesus was coming, who was to be the peace of mankind. He is our peace. I used to have that on a motto on the wall, He is our peace. So, the angel could say peace on earth, because the Peace had come to earth.

Now, this text shows, or at least it illustrates, Jesus' method of imparting help directly and personally, that was Christ in the midst at the center. And He could be in the midst, because He is God. He is Spirit. He is timeless. He is spaceless. He is supreme. He is all in all. Therefore, He can be at the center.

Now, I point out and borrow an illustration that Christ is the center of all things. He is the hub around which everything revolves, and the illustration is that of a wheel. Somebody said centuries ago, that a wheel was an example that Jesus Christ was the hub of the wheel, and everything created was on the rim of the wheel, so said the old man. Everything that is, is equally distant from Jesus and equally near to Him. You know how there's a hub in the middle and spokes going out to the rim and the rim goes around the equidistant at all points from the hub. And Jesus Christ is that hub, and everything is on the rim, so that it's just as near to Him from down here as from over there, up there. Everybody's equally close and equally far, for Jesus Christ is the hub.

Now, I want to point out here how our Lord Jesus Christ is at the center. Jesus in the midst. And thus, if He's in the midst, He's accessible from anywhere in life. And this is good news, very wonderful, good news. For instance, let me point out seven things here, and say that Jesus Christ is at the center of those things, and thus is accessible equally, everywhere.

He is in the center of geography, let us say, because there is no favored spot. It so happens that I am at the present, reading Newman's history of Latin Christianity, and reading again the story of the Crusaders. Before the Crusader, the time of the Crusaders, there was a belief that there was some virtue attached, or merit at any rate attached in going on pilgrimage to the very place where Jesus was born, and particularly to the sepulcher of our Lord. And when Peter the Hermit, barefooted old orator that he was, whipped all of the East, all of Europe, really, into a white heat to get the Crusades launched, it was that we might deliver a grave which Jesus Christ had been out of for more than 1000 years, might deliver it from the Mohammedins. If they could just get there to that grave, everything would be all right. There was some virtue in being where Jesus had been.

I don't know why we insist upon being spiritually obtuse. Haven't we heard Jesus say that? And I tell you that neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem do men worship the Father. For the Father seeketh such to worship Him who worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is not on a mountain or a city. Why didn't they read that? Why instead of all the bloodshed and death and starvation and freezing to death and all the rest of the long trips to get to the place where Jesus had been born or where he had died or where he had been buried? Why didn't they read that passage that says, I say unto you, that henceforth men shall not worship the Father in this city. But men shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

There is no geographical advantage anywhere in the world. You would not be one bit better a Christian if you lived in Jerusalem. And you could go to the globe, the geographic globe and you could find the spot exactly across from, farthest from Jerusalem and live there, and you wouldn't be at any disadvantage. For Jesus Christ is in the middle of geography. And He is just as near to him from anywhere as it is from anywhere. And it's just as far from Him also. So that the geography doesn't mean anything. Oh, if I could but go to Jerusalem. And how much money has been spent by preachers who felt that they could preach better if they'd only look on Jerusalem. They go over and look all on Jerusalem and come back and all the good it does them is it gives them stories to tell. But they're no better, and the people are no better, no. Jesus is at the hub, and geography is all around Him. And as just as near to Him from anywhere as it is from anywhere.

Then I'll say that we're just as near to him in time because He's at the center of time. Let's not, let's not mournfully talk about the time of Christ. Of course, you have to use that expression. And I use it myself. It's necessary in our human thinking that we do use such phrases, although we ought to know what we mean by them. There is a song that says, I think when I read this sweet story of old, how Jesus was here among men. When he drew little children as lambs to His fold, I should like to

have been with Him then. And I suppose there's been many a tear wiped out of many a pious eye when we've been singing that song.

But did you know that the people who were with Jesus when He walked among men, were not as well off as they were ten days after He had left them, ten days after He'd been gone. He sent the Holy Ghost down. And the blinded disciples who only knew partly, now suddenly knew with a blaze of light, the times of Christ, we say, I'd liked to have lived in the time of Christ. Why there were hypocrites and Pharisees and opposers and murderers and unbelievers in the time of Christ. You won't get any better by going back. Some of you look back nostalgically upon what you consider the good old days.

Now, you ought to be delivered from that, sir, I never fall into the trap of talking about the good old days of the Christian Missionary Alliance. I read and wrote the history, the life of Dr. A.B. Simpson, and so I keep my mouth wisely shut about those good old days. Things weren't any better then than now, because Jesus Christ was at the center of time and it's just as near to the heart of Jesus from where you are now in Chicago, as it was in New York when Simpson founded the Alliance. And it was just as close now to Jesus, from where you are in 1955, as it was in 1884 or 1901.

Now, again, Jesus Christ is the center of the race. And there are no favored races, and no favorite races. I think we ought to stop and let that soak in a little bit and point out that Jesus Christ is the Son of man. And He is not the Son of the first century, nor of the 20th century. He is a Son of Man. He is not a Son of the Jewish race only. He is the son of the Anglo Saxon and all the races there are and all the colors there are. When Jesus Christ was incarnated in mortal flesh, He was not incarnated only in the body of a Jew, He was incarnated in the body of the race. So, you can go to Tibet, or Afghanistan, or the Indians of South America, or the Mohammedans of Arabia, or the Englishman of London, or the Scotch of Glasgow, and you can preach Jesus, and if there's faith and willingness to follow Him, it's just as near to Him from any one of those given points, for they're all on the wheel rim anyhow. And they are all as near, and all as far.

That's why we in the Christian and Missionary Alliance do not think that we ought to first go into a country and educate it, and then, when we've educated the people, then preach Christ to them. We know better than that. We know that Jesus Christ is just as near to an uncultured heathen as He is to a cultured man from New York or London. And that's why He's in the middle of all culture and all culture levels. And a person who does not know how to read and write, who has never worn anything but the briefest of clothing, and who has never had a decent cooked meal in his life, has never traveled in any modern conveyances, if you will preach Christ to him and be patient and make him understand, and his heart awakes, and the Spirit illuminates his mind, he'll believe on Jesus and reach out and touch the hem of His garment and be transformed, just as certainly from the lowest.

I don't know whether Miss Benke, who probably knows more about that than I do, though, I agree and know that Indonesia is a vast place and that New Guinea is far to the east and probably as far removed as South America from here geographically, but I think probably she would know more and I think would agree with me, that those inhabitants of New Guinea, which our missionaries have told us, are the lowest down the scale.

Now, there may be others. I haven't heard of any others. They say that there's something about them, completely repulsive, completely bestial, completely belonging to the jungle and the barnyard. And yet, they will believe in Jesus Christ and be born again just as quickly as a man with a monocle and an Oxford accent. Because it's just as near to Jesus from the jungle as it is from the college. Just as near to Jesus from the lowest stratum of society as it is from the highest. He's in the midst of all cultures, and He's in the midst of all ages. By that I mean, human ages, our birthdays. It is just as near to Jesus from eighty as it is from eight. Just as near from seventy as it is from seven. Just as near to Jesus and just as far from one age as another age.

Well, I agree and they realize that as we get older, we get harder and more careless. And the likelihood of our coming to Jesus diminishes as we get older. But our ability to come to Jesus, the distance we are from Jesus, is no greater when we're ninety than when we're ten or eleven, or any other age you might think of. So, Jesus Christ stands in the middle of the human race, stands in the middle of geography, stands in the middle of time, stands in the middle of all cultures, stands in the middle of all races, and stands in the middle of all ages. He is in the midst and he is speaking peace be unto you.

And again, our Lord is in the middle of all life's experiences. You know, experience is an awareness of something that is or is going on. I'd say that's experience. If something is or is going on, that's an experience. The newborn baby hasn't had much experience, bless his little heart. He hasn't been around very long and the experience he has had, hasn't pleased him. So, he sets up a wild howl always. If they don't howl, they make them.

Well, here he is, bless his little newborn heart. He is just in the world, a little stranger. And he hasn't had much experience. He has practically none, practically no experience. And then, every once in a while, we hear of a man who is 100 years old. He's had some experience. He's been aware of a lot of things happening. The little chap isn't. Every day brings a new experience, every day. Every hour brings a new experience to the newborn. He enlarges if he's normal and grows, gets in contact with more things. Tennyson in his In Memoriam has, I can't quote it verbatim, but it's a very lovely little thing. You can't read it without smiling in appreciation about the little baby that holds his hand up in front of his face and says, that isn't me. And there is where his intelligence awakes. He's in here somewhere. He something else. That isn't me. And he says he makes the difference between me and not me. Tennyson makes it very beautiful. It sounds rather useless the way I put it I'm afraid. But the way he put it, it really has meaning, that when he

awakes to the fact that there's me and then there's not me. And when he gets aware of, that he's having experiences, as soon as he knows this is me and this is that woman that feeds me, that's not me.

Well, there you have it, his `experiences have started. Well, if he lives somewhere in the hills and never comes out, he probably won't have a very wide field of experience. If he's a world traveler and a busy man and gets a lot of education and does many things and sees many things and hears many things and people, his experiences will be vast, so vast that it's a mystery and a wonder how his little brain can ever file them for future reference and keep them in his memory, but it does.

Well now, which is it nearer? Is it nearer to Jesus from that child of no experience or from that old man of much integrity and experience? No difference. Jesus Christ stands in the middle of life's experience. And you can reach Him always on the rim and everything comes into Him from the rim. And we can move into Him from our early childhood, the little one that's just old enough to lisp and say, Jesus, I believe and can be saved. The old tottering man, he's not likely to, but if he will, he can come and believe in Christ, for Christ stands in the middle of human experience.

Jonathan Edwards, that mighty preacher of early days in our country, was converted when he was five years-old, and he said I never backslid, and went right on. Five years old, he was converted. What experience does a five-year-old boy have?

I just got finished in my private devotional reading in my study. I have just finished reading those early chapters of 1 Samuel. And here was a boy the commentators think might have been twelve years old. He was in the temple. Here he was a little lad. Even the commentators get sentimental and talk about his little jacket. They made him a little robe and put it on, and he was just a little fellow. And then, here was an old man ninety-eight-years old, out in the next room, Samuel and Eli, the boy and the aged man. What experience has that boy had? Practically none. What experience had the old man had? Practically all. He had run the scale. He had run the gamut of human possibilities. And yet, it was just as near to God from little Samuel who had no experiences as from Eli who had many, and vice versa.

So, they sort of divided the world up into three parts, and that's about all we've got left today, isn't it? We've got religion, culture, politics, and the military. That's about all there is to it. Everything else falls somewhere inside those brackets. And Jesus Christ was crucified in the middle of that. So, it's just as easy to reach Him from the philosopher's ivory tower as it is from the priest's sanctuary. Just as easy for the soldier within his uniform to reach him as it is the thinker with his big books, for He's in the middle of it.

You remember, when our Lord hung on the cross, they wrote his superscription above his head in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. And I wouldn't have thought of this, but somebody pointed out that

in doing this, God had taken in the whole world. Hebrew was religion, Greek was philosophy, Latin was military conquests. If you wanted religion, go to the Hebrew. If you wanted philosophy, go to the Greek. If you wanted politics and military conquest, go to the Romans. So, his name was written there, this is Jesus Christ, king of the Jews in Hebrew and Greek and Latin, so that all the possibilities of human experience, the highest flights of religion, the farthest out and farthest in-reaches of philosophical thought, and the most practical and terrible conquests made by politicians, all of this, Jesus was in the middle of it and stood there. And it was as close to Him from the Roman soldier that said, this is the Son of God, as from the Hebrew teacher that said, Master, Thou art sent from God, Nicodemus.

Christ Jesus our Lord stands in the midst, so nobody has any advantage over anybody else. Thank God. Aren't you glad for that? Nobody can frighten me, intimidate me and send me away like a whipped curd. Nobody can say, ah, but you don't know? They try it. They try it. They smile and say it's because you don't know. And I smile back and think Brother, you just don't know, yourself. It's because I do know. It's because I can reach Him as quickly from where I am as from where any other man is. Einstein, the greatest mind probably alive today, and he could reach out and touch his Messiah, for he's a Jew, if he would. Probably won't, but if he would. There's a lot of people in America that can't read and write yet. They can only sign their X on their official papers. And Einstein and the man who makes an X on his paper, are all in the same bracket, same category.

So, nobody has any advantage over anybody else. So don't let's mourn the fact we didn't live when Jesus lived. We live in the time of Christ, now. Let's not mourn the fact we didn't live in Jerusalem. It's just as near to Jesus from Chicago. If you're old and bent and tired and sick, don't worry, it's just as near to Jesus from where you are as to where that little boy tossing the baseball in such abandon of delight. So it's just as easy for one or the other.

You say, then why doesn't everybody come? Because of our inexcusable stubbornness, because of our unbelief, because of our preoccupation with other things. Because we do not believe we need Him at all. These things keep us away. We turn our backs on Him because we do not think we need Him. But if we'll admit that we need Him, thank God you can come to Him and get His help, touch Him and feel the power and virtue flow out, wherever you are, whoever you are, whatever race you belong to, whatever culture level you find yourself on, whatever educational level. Jesus didn't come to save learned men only. He came to save the sick. Not white men only, but all colors that are under the sun. Not young people only, but all people of any age, down to the moment when they drop asleep and go back to the dust. So, let's believe that. And let's think of Jesus in the midst. That's the most important thing about this church service. The most important thing about Chicago, Jesus is here in the midst. You can reach him from where you are. Amen.