

## The Sociability of Jesus

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THE vacation period is particularly crowded with subtle temptation to our young people. They need social recreation, but in view of the many disastrous results—both physical and spiritual—that follow every festive season, what line of conduct should they pursue in the midst of social pleasures? Would it not be well to consider prayerfully the attitude of Christ toward society?

### I. The Character and Purpose of Christ's Sociability.

1. It was a Broad Sociability. What a contrast there was between the social types of Judaism and Christianity! John the Baptist—the last of the old dispensation—shunned society and lived in the desert. The Pharisees—the religious leaders of the Jews—were proudly exclusive. Christ, on the other hand, lived among men. He created a new standard. His followers were to be like him, broadly social, non-exclusive. His sociability was broad. Notice the varied classes admitted to his friendship. There was no caste line in Christ's society. He counted among His friends both rich and poor, learned and illiterate. Although His friendship was courted by Nicodemus

Matthew was called to be Christ's disciple, he gave a feast in honor of the occasion. And why not? Yet how strange it would seem, if we followed Matthew's example and invited friends to a joyous social party to celebrate our acceptance of Christ's call—our conversion!

2. Christ's Broad Sociability was Always Consistent with Holiness of Character. It was a clean sociability. This is the difference between Christ's social life and that of many of our friends. It is impossible to find an excuse for license in the breadth of Christ's society. He was active in social engagements, but they did not destroy His religious life. He never went where a child of God ought not to go. He was never found at Herod's feasts. Often was He busy with entertainment, but never to the neglect of His hour of prayer. His time was fully occupied, but never to the exclusion of public worship on the Sabbath Day. He must often have been wearied in His social life, but never too weary to unroll the book of the law and read. He was invited as a stranger to eat with the two of Emmaus, but He did not neglect to return thanks and thus bear witness to God. He dined with the proud

### II. In View of Christ's Sociability, What is Our Duty?

1. To Be Social Ourselves. Christ was devout, yet He was companionable. You imitate Him in prayer, imitate Him also in His friendliness. It is not born in some of us to be at ease among men. We are timid and shun people, but for the Saviour's sake we should overcome our timidity and reserve. We cannot be fully Christlike unless we are agreeable in company. Be friendly on the street; you are a follower of the friendly Jesus. Greet the members of the church. Do you young people speak to the old? A good old Christian complained to me that the young did not speak to him on the street. The older ones should recognize the young, especially the little ones. We ought to be companionable at the close of the church services, keeping ever in mind that it is a part of our religious duty to be social.

2. To Recognize a Limit to Sociability. So many Christians make the grievous mistake of not recognizing a limit to social life. They refuse to hear the warning voice of God which says: "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." How many have been lost by fearing to refuse the demands of society! Others again would not go beyond the limit if they knew where the line was drawn. Let me ask you, "What is the effect of that social engagement on your Christian



THE PRIDE OF WESTERN CANADA.

the ruler, He did not on that account look down on Matthew, a despised tax-gatherer. The aristocratic Pharisee invited Him to their table, but that did not raise him above noticing the disgraced woman who came to weep at his feet. A rich young ruler once knelt before Him, and a chief Pharisee invited Him to his house, yet He sat by the well and talked freely with an outcast Samaritan woman.

There was nothing narrow in Christ's sociability. He even included in His friendship those who were prejudiced against Him. Nathanael asked incredulously: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But Christ, recognizing the inherent goodness of the man, said: "Behold, a man in whom is no guile." He saw good in those who differed from Him, and accepted their friendship. He was accessible to all sorts and conditions of men. The latch-string of His heart was always out to all.

The broadness of Christ's sociability is seen again in the places He frequented. He was no recluse. He continually accepted invitations to social gatherings. So much so, in fact, that the austere Pharisee said: "He is a glutton and a drinker."

It was at a social function that He manifested His glory, for the first sign of His Messiahship was given at a wedding feast. This companionable nature of Jesus was so noticeable, that when

Pharisees, but He took His religion along with Him. Broad as His social instinct was, it was never inconsistent with His holy character.

3. Christ's Broad and Consistent Sociability was inspired with the Purpose of Saving Men. Christ's holiness was no negative thing. It was the inspiration of His social life. His motto might well have been, "Social to Save." He did not live for the mere pleasure of society. Instead of following this instinct to master Him, He controlled and used it for the salvation of men. To Zachaeus He said, "To-day must I abide at thy house, for the Son of man is come to seek and to save." The feasts He attended were made occasions of preaching the gospel. It may seem incongruous to us, but the fact is that many of His "sermons" were after-dinner speeches and social table-talk. He moved in society with the one object of winning men.

Let me repeat: Christ's sociability was broad. Proclaim it, for some are hurting the gospel and the Church by refusing to recognize the social instinct in man. But herald it far and wide that His sociability was always consistent with holiness; for some in our churches are cultivating sociability to the neglect of holiness. Yes; and always add with a clearer and a stronger voice, that the Christian object of sociability is the salvation of men.

life? Does it lessen your ardor for Christ?" Ann Hazeltine, the brilliant young woman who became the wife of Adoniram Judson, wrote in her diary: "My conscience does not trouble me about attending certain parties, but I refrain from going because they hinder me in prayer and Bible study." Christians must be social, but there is a limit even to proper festivities.

3. To Recognize the Danger in Wrong Sociability. There is a right and a wrong sociability. The Christian is not to be a mope. Human life requires society, and God does not forbid it. He does, however, deny pleasures in which danger lurks—danger to the soul, if not always to the body. We ought to see the danger for ourselves and others.

In conclusion: If Christ's motive dominates your life, it will be true of you that

Our homes are cheerier for your sake;  
Our doorways brighter blooming;  
And, all about, the social air  
Is sweeter for your coming.

—Service.

A grandmother, reproving her grandchildren for making noise, said: "Dear me, children, you are so noisy to-day! Can't you be more quiet?"  
"Now, grandma, you mustn't scold. You see, if it wasn't for us, you wouldn't be a grandma at all!"—*Harper's Weekly*.