Welcome! Welcome!

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"And the people, when they knew it, followed Him and He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing."—Luke 9: 11.

My subject has been suggested to me by the rendering of this passage given in the Revised Version, where we read: "But the multitudes perceiving it, followed Him; *and He welcomed them.*" The difference lies, you see, between the words "He received them" and "He welcomed them." The new version is an instructive improvement, of which we will at once make evangelical use.

I. First, may the Holy Spirit help us while we dwell upon THE FACT that Jesus welcomed those who sought Him.

We observe, first, that *our Lord received all comers at all times.* The time mentioned in our text was the most inconvenient possible. He was seeking rest for His disciples, who had gone through the various towns and villages preaching and working miracles; they were a good deal elated at their success, and it was needful that they should have a little quiet retirement to think matters over, and to come down into a calm state of mind. Moreover, they were weary; for they were so thronged by the people that they had not time even for needful refreshment, and rest was, therefore, absolutely requisite, lest these few men, who were in fact the hope of the church and of the world, should die of exhaustion. The Master put them into a ship that they might sail away and find retirement in a desert place. Rest was absolutely needed to the overwrought workers. A great sorrow was on them also, for John had been beheaded, and it was meet that they should solace their grief by a short retirement. At this time, too, our blessed Lord desired obscurity; for Herod was enquiring for Him; and even when that delightful king was in his best mood he was not one whose near acquaintance anyone would wish to cultivate. He might, perhaps, have listened to Jesus as he listened to John; but he would have sought His life as soon as he had gratified his curiosity, or another Herodias would have goaded him on to murder the faithful preacher who made the palace too hot for the wanton. Our Lord's time was not yet come, neither to be exhibited in a royal court, or to be slain as a royal victim; and therefore He sought a desert place for a little while. It was most inconvenient, therefore, to be followed by so great a crowd. Were the workers to have no rest? Could there be no retirement afforded, especially at such a time when it was so necessary? Is it not wonderful that under such circumstances our blessed Lord should *welcome* the insatiable throng?

Let me put the truth before some of you here who as yet are unsaved. Come to Jesus when you will, it shall always be at the right time. Times consecrated to other purposes shall yet afford you welcome. The saints of God gather at the communion table, and the spreading of that table is not intended to be a means of grace to the unconverted; on the contrary, it is fenced and guarded, and reserved for believers only, and none have any right there but those who are in Christ. The object of the Lord's Supper is not conversion, but edification; it is intended that as many as are alive unto God should there be fed, that those emblems should remind them of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which is the food of their spiritual life. Yet if any of you should be looking on—ay, and even if you should have intruded there without a right to come, yet if you seek the Saviour He will not be so occupied with the fellowship of saints as to refuse a sinner. His heart will not be so taken up with the near and dear and choice love of His own favored ones as to shut his eye to the cry of the humble and contrite. If thou seek Him, even when thou art intruding, He will be found of thee.

The same truth will now be set in another light by a second remark. *Our Lord received all sorts of comers.* They were a motley throng, and I fear that few, if any, of them were actuated by any high or exalted motive. No doubt some came to hear, and others came to see; but many came for what they could get. They followed after Jesus, because they were sick, and He could heal them. "Ah me!" I have heard it said by awakened ones, "I am afraid, if I came to Christ, I should come from a selfish motive." Dismiss that fear, which at bottom is self-righteous; what should a beggar come to your house for but to seek for alms? To gain something is the only motive with which a poor sinner can come to Christ. Our fear of hell, or dread of sin, or hope of pardon, must drive or draw us to Christ; in any case, our motive must be to receive at His hands. I confess that I at first came to Christ only and solely for what I could get out of Him. It was an apostle who said, "We love Him because He first loved us." I have heard of a love of Jesus which is purely disinterested, and I believe it is possible, and that it may grow up in after Christian life; but at the first we must come to Jesus with an eye to what we shall obtain at His hands; we must come because we cannot do without Him. There is no other way of coming. "It is a low motive," says one. So it may be; but it is a powerful motive for all that. At any rate, Christ exhorts us to come unto Him for rest and for salvation, and I do not remember a single exhortation to this ideal, disinterested love. The Lord Jesus welcomed the multitudes, though they came from low motives, and so will He welcome us if we do but come to Him. If what we come for is something for ourselves, if we come to Him that sin may be forgiven, and that we may be made the children of God, our motives will not be disgusting to Christ; but He will welcome us.

Most of them might have been objected to by our Lord if He had chosen to do so, for various reasons, the most of them on account of their *poverty.* They had not even a crust among them. They had come away in such a hurry that they had not brought a day's food with them; and if they came to Christ they must be fed by Him within a few hours, or else drop from sheer starvation. They were a ragged regiment, a hungry herd—what some fine folks call the mob, the canaille; but Jesus welcomed them, and never said a syllable about their bare backs and empty pockets. How squeamish some of His servants are; but their Master had no such proud ways about Him. I heard one say the other day that he could not attend a place of worship because he had not clothes that were fit to come in. I wonder what sort of garments the Lord Jesus would object to in a coming sinner!

None of you can plead poverty. If you have not a penny to bless yourselves with, Christ will bless you without money and without price.

Neither did our Lord ever reject one person on account of *youth.* His disciples thought that such a preacher as He was ought never to be listened to except by persons of intellect, or at least of ripe years, who could appreciate what he would say; and when the mothers brought the children, the disciples were much displeased with them; but the Master welcomed the young, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Dear boys and girls, Jesus will not put you by to wait till you are older; but He will welcome you just as you are. Ah, how sweetly Jesus is doing this to my knowledge with my little folks. I am right glad to say that we are continually receiving boys and girls into the church. Childpiety is no rarity among us; we find it no cause of difficulty, but a well-spring of delight. Dear children, do not be afraid to come because you are so little, for Jesus has told the big people that except they receive Him as little children they shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. He said, also, "They that seek me early shall find me." Come to Him at once.

There were some in the throng, too, whom Jesus might have rejected because they were *too old.* Here they come! They can scarcely see their way; they limp, they use crutches, they are deaf, and their limbs are very feeble. Surely, when these poor old souls come to Jesus, he might say to them, "What am I to do with you worn-out old creatures? Go, and spend the rest of your days where you spent the first part of them! How dare you think of coming to Me when you are bald-headed, feeble, lame and blind? How can you be soldiers of the cross?" Glory be to His name, our great Captain enlists old men, makes friends with old women, and delights to magnify the greatness of His grace in the salvation of the most infirm. Father William, though it be the eleventh hour with you, our Lord still calls you into His vineyard. Come, and fear not.

Once more: *Our Lord receives all with a hearty welcome.* He did not merely allow the people to come near, tolerating their presence; but "He welcomed them." When He saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd, His heart was stirred within Him, and He at once laid Himself out to do them good. The sight of their need aroused His compassion; the deep fountains of His infinite love were broken up at once, and flooded His whole nature, so that "He was moved with compassion." He proved that He welcomed them by the deeds that He wrought for them. He taught them concerning the kingdom; He healed those that had need of healing; and He fed the whole five thousand. There was not one single exception to this rule; He welcomed every one of them—taught, healed, fed, and smiled on all. He did not single out one, and say, "You, sir, may go your way; I will have nothing to do with you;" but each one felt that he was welcome. It is just so now. "Him that cometh to Me," saith He, "I will in no wise cast out." This is the blessed fact.

II. Now, I come to use this as AN ENCOURAGEMENT. If Jesus Christ, when He was born here on earth, welcomed all that came at all hours, then he will welcome you, my friend, if you come to him now; for the circumstances are just the same. You are *the same sort of person* as those whom Jesus used to welcome. They were good for nothing bodies; they were persons that were full of need, and could not possibly bring a price with which to purchase His favor.

The untruthful, the unclean, the ungodly are the sort of people that Jesus came to seek and to save.

And then, there is *the same Saviour.* Jesus Christ is the same gracious Pardoner as He was in the days of His flesh. "Why," say you, "He is in heaven." Yes; but I never knew any body lose anything by going to heaven; it is all the other way. Jesus has not lost his tenderness nor his compassion, nor his delight in blessing the sons of men. He is the same Saviour in glory that He was in His humiliation. I invite you to come, dear friends, though you are suffering from the same unfitness as these people were. Come just as you are, and come with the same expectations they did; for they expected Him to work wonders for them, and He did so. Jesus is in the same mind as when He would not condemn the guilty woman, and when He prayed for His murderers. He is still bent upon the one errand of saving men; He still welcomes sinners. Since, then, you are under the same conditions, come, and *expect the same result* from your coming.

III. Thirdly, we use our text as A LESSON. Dear friends, if Jesus Christ welcomes all that come to Him, let all of us who are His followers imitate His example, and give a warm welcome to those who seek the Lord. Whatever their motive is, whenever we see people coming to the worship of God, and especially when we see them a little impressed, let us welcome them heartily.

Jesus welcomed them; let us warmly welcome all comers. Do not seem to say to them, "You want to be saved, do you?" "Yes." "You had better mind what you are about. You know there are a great many hypocrites. I am not sure of your sincerity. Do you really want to be saved?" If the seeker cries, "O sir, what must I do to be saved?" do not answer with icy words, "Do not be so excited. Be calm, and let me lay the gospel before you in a clear, didactic manner, for fear you should be deceived. I hope it is all right with you, and that these desires are not mere natural excitement, but are the fruit of the Spirit. Still it is my duty to be faithful and put you to the test." Why, my dear friend, if you had been in a right state of heart, you would have led that man into the kingdom of heaven before you got half through those cautious remarks. Give him a loving, hearty welcome, and not a cold, suspicious searching. Say, "Do you want to be saved?" "Yes." "Then come and welcome: believe in the Lord Jesus and He is yours. You want Jesus Christ, do you?" "Yes." "Come along: He waits to be gracious; He is here present; and all you have to do is to trust in Him."

I put this in a very simple way; but there is very much in it. Jesus, the Master, welcomed sinners; let all His servants wear the livery of love, and set wide open every door for sinners to enter. "But perhaps, there is very little good in these who say they are seeking." The remark is no doubt correct; perhaps, there is no good at all in them. What then? Let us welcome them all the same. Did not our Lord receive you when there was no good about you? Should not you also receive such, and set the gospel before them, that God the Holy Spirit may bless them?

If anyone here wishes to find mercy and cannot find it, I would during the last minute of my discourse try to welcome him. Friend, thou sayest, "How can I be saved?" Have you ever heard the gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved?" "Yes," say you; "but I do not think I believe aright." Listen. Here is a verse for you. Get out your New Testament. Look on John v. 24. Turn it down. Turn it down, and read it when you get home. I beg all of you who have not found the Saviour to mark that passage: Read it carefully, and keep on reading it over and over again for an hour. Read it over ten thousand times, if need be, for I want you to find salvation through it. I know this text will save any man living, God blessing it to him. Here it is:

"Verily verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

What a grand verse! Is there anything in it about believing *aright?* Not a syllable. Only let a man truly believe, and he "hath" (it is not said "shall have")—he has now "everlasting life." Mark that—not a life that will die out in a quarter of a year, if he does not mind—no; but "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Suck at that text, poor soul; salvation lies in it. Believe in Jesus, and you are saved. May God help you to believe it by His blessed Spirit, and you shall live unto Him henceforth and forever. Amen.

The Progress of the Negro in the South.

Rev. A. G. Haygood, one of the truest friends of the colored race, and one who has carefully studied their condition for many years with the best of opportunities, presents, in the Atlanta *Constitution*, this hopeful view of the gains made in educating the negro:

A grand beginning has been made for clearing these tangled jungles and draining the malaria swamps. The full results cannot be expressed in any grouping of statistics. The best work done in this world cannot be compressed into figures. Some things can be so told. In money, nearly sixty millions of dollars have gone into the education of the negroes in the South. What is now stated is based on the highest authority; the facts have been obtained, at first hand, from official records, up to January, 1889. Northern benevolence had invested in this work—inducing the great gifts, a million each, of Mr. John F. Slater and Mr. Daniel Hand—$15,767,746; the Southern States, white people paying nearly all the taxes, in maintaining common and normal schools, $37,377,673.24. Add for 1889 about seven hundred thousand from Northern benevolence and about four millions from the Southern States, and we have near the sum total of money invested in preparing the negro to be a good citizen.

No figures that men use can tell the North of the hundreds of noble lives consecrated to the work of Christian philanthropy. Among them have appeared some pestilent people, but most of them are worthy to join in the fellowship of "the noble army of confessors"—"of whom the world is not worthy."

What is there to show for this vast outlay of money and human life? More than it cost of life or money, or both. More than a million negro children attend the public schools, of which there are more than sixteen thousand, taught by negro teachers, trained most of them in the higher institutions supported by Northern benevolence, many of them in the State normal schools for the training of teachers. Ignorant and peevish people revile these schools, but they are infinitely better than none. Two millions of these people can at least read. No chapter in history matches this one, in the effort made or the results achieved. So much was never done before to help a poor and illiterate people, and so many of such people never learned so much in so short a time. People who respect facts and know history will see in these results the only lines of hopeful endeavor for those who would help the negro in America; so help him as to adjust and adapt him to the genius of our government and civilization.

A FAMILY SCANDAL.—A well-known U. P. minister noted with sorrow that his congregation was becoming "small by degrees, and beautifully less;" so, after much cogitation, he hit on a plan which, for once, crowded his church. At the close of his sermon he announced, with a solemn air, that on the following Sunday it would be his painful duty to discuss a family scandal which directly affected several members of the Kirk. On the next Sabbath the sacred edifice was crowded with an expectant crowd, who had the pleasure of listening to an excellent sermon, the subject being the picking of the apple by Eve, and the eating thereof by herself and Adam.

—A preacher who held forth in St. Paul in the early days, in closing up his prayer one Sunday asked the Lord "To comfort the afflicted, heal the sick and raise the devil." The congregation was, of course, greatly discomposed, and even the good old deacon found it hard work to keep a straight face. Horrified by his *lapsus linguæ*, the minister, in the meantime, made matters very much worse by correcting himself in the words, "O Lord, we did not mean raise the devil, but raise the dead." The organist, who was a sagacious man, immediately took in the situation and helped the very much rattled person out by striking up a hymn.—*St. Paul Pioneer Press.*

A Patient Heart.

FOR THE SICK AND INFIRM.

All of us want to give something to God. You hear of others giving time, money, service, and it is a grief to you that you have nothing to render to the great and tender Physician for whom others are so busy. Once you could take your place in His vineyard and feel yourself of some little use to God and man, but now something whispers to your heart that you are a cumberer of the ground and can render nothing to the Lord for all His benefits toward you. Those wise men must have rejoiced; they could bring the new-born Saviour gold, frankincense and myrrh; but a little Sunday-school scholar said to me once, "The shepherds did better still—they gave Christ themselves."

It is in your power to-day to bring to the Master a very precious offering, whatever your circumstances may be, and however weak you may feel. If He needed you just now in the vineyard, you would be there; if He required money from your purse, he would first put it therein; if He required the service that health and strength can render His loving hand would not have weakened your strength in the way. This little verse will show what you can render the Lord:

"My full day's work is done,
And this is all my part—
I give a patient God
My patient heart."

Or it is an impatient one you offer to him just now? Perhaps you feel inclined to say, "Did you know all, you would not wonder at my fretfulness. There is this worry and that worry and the other, and infirmities have laid hold upon me, and nothing goes on as it would do were I well enough to see to things. Nobody cares about a poor creature like me, and I am all alone." But even if it were possible that not one of your fellow-creatures cared about you, which I think in your heart you know they do, still you would be the object of untold love, unbounded compassion, everlasting remembrance. You are the object of such love; at this moment, amid all the pains and anxieties and weakness, it is as true that God loves as that God lives, and as to your being all alone, do not forget that the great, wise, merciful Lord has said, "Certainly I will be with thee."

Friend, if your Master loves you so truly, and is within you now, can you not bring forth the fruit of patience? True, the way seems long and mysterious, and past your finding out, but what He is doing He will explain to you hereafter; just now what He asks of you is patient faith. "I sometimes envy the flowers by my bedside their freedom from pain, and wonder why I should suffer so, and they should look so fair and calm and untroubled," said a Christian whom God chose for the furnace of affliction; the beautiful roses could not respond to His teachings of pain, but her immortal soul could and did, and He was shaping her into His own glorious image while He was acquainted with grief.

Ah! those words remind us of a wonderful cure for impatience. Since the dear Lord Himself has been a Man of Sorrows, since Jesus wept, shall the disciple murmur to tread in His footsteps and learn what it is to watch and wait in Gethsemane? Ask the Redeemer to teach you the prayer He lifted there; breathing those words in sincerity, the fever of fretful unrest will leave you, and you will show to others how, even in tribulation, God can give to His children a calm and patient heart.

It will help you likewise to be patient when you remember that the roughest, hardest post is given to those whom the commander most trusts and honors. The hardest lesson is given to the scholar who will do the teacher most credit. It is not because you have *failed*, but because you have glorified God in the sunshine, that now He gives you the highest training of all—to be made perfect through the things you suffer. All things work together for good to them that love God, and when you take the assurance of God's Holy Word that even this pain, this weakness, this trouble is working out for you blessing and joy and sunlight unspeakable, will you not put by the fretting, and, lifting holy hands of prayer, humbly, trustfully, adoringly bring to-day to your patient God a patient heart? "Oh, impatient ones," cried a good minister now in the Land where there is no unrest, "do the *leaves* say nothing to you?" He pointed out that their glory is not the creation of an hour; every leaf-stem has a cradle in which is an infant germ, and rocking winds and rain as well as sunshine will cause its beauty by-and-bye to unfold. And thus is God working for *you*; accept His winds and His rain, believe in His present love and in His unshadowed hereafter, and deny not to Him who is mindful of His own *a patient heart.*—*The Quiver.*

The Early Baptists in Holland.

A writer in the April *Contemporary Review* on Rotterdam and Dutch Workers," says:

"An authority on Anabaptist history, Dr. Ludwig Keller, archivist of Munster, says, 'The more I examine the documents of the time at my command, the more I am astonished at the diffusion of Anabaptist views, an extent of which no other investigator has had any knowledge;' and he says further: 'The coast cities of the North Sea and East Sea from Flanders to Dantzig were filled with Anabaptists.' In 1530 there was scarcely a village in the Netherlands where they were not found. One hundred and fifty years later, a writer on 'The Religion of the Dutch' divides the population of Holland into three parts—Reformed, Roman Catholics, and Anabaptists. And the descendants of the latter people must, to a great extent, have remained the working classes of Holland, for their creed cut them off from ascending into the ruling class, if that had been easy, which we shall see it was not. 'It is not lawful,' they said, 'for Christians to swear, to exercise any charge of civil magistracy, or to make use of the sword, not even to punish the wicked, or to oppose force with force, or to engage in a war upon any account or occasion.'

"The Anabaptists suffered not only for their attitude of reproof to all who took the sword of authority, but also for the terror with which in the Peasant Revolt, and in the fanatical outbreak at Munster, their predecessors had inspired the rulers. Their martyrology is full of touching incidents, some of which occurred in Rotterdam. In 1593, Anna Tautzen, returning from England, whither she had fled, was denounced for having sung a hymn. On her way to prison, she asked a baker in the crowd to take charge of her infant. The child bore the name of Jessias de Lind, and lived to become burgomaster. Its mother was drowned in company with another woman, the betrayer throwing herself into the water immediately after. About the same time, several men were beheaded, and other women drowned. One of the latter was a girl of fourteen, who, among other things said, 'I will risk my body and my goods, I will deny my friends and give up all for Jesus' sake.' The elevation of soul which enabled these poor people to face their dreadful fate comes out in another woman, thus murdered, who left four children, to whom she wrote a long letter, containing this prayer:

"'O Holy Father, sanctify the children of thy servant in Thy truth, and preserve them from all evil and injustice for the sake of Thy holy name. O Almighty Father, I commit them to Thee, for they are Thy creatures, take care of them for they are the work of Thy hands. Let them walk in Thy ways. Amen.'

"In 1558, the Rotterdam people rose in rebellion against these atrocities. The executioner doing his work very slowly, the crowd got exasperated, and, proceeding from one point to another, drove away the judge and his officers, stormed the prison, and delivered all who were to have burnt. Thus it is clear the Rotterdam people were much affected with Anabaptist views, and that even when in religious profession they were Roman Catholics or Reformed. A proof that this sympathy was common to the townsfolk is the way the Rotterdam authorities intervened on behalf of Anabaptists badly treated in Switzerland. They addressed a long letter to the Council at Berne, entreating them to do justice to their Monnonite subjects, and assuring them that they had no 'cause to regret the liberty which had been accorded to Anabaptists in Holland, through the inflexible determination of William of Orange, and that notwithstanding the opposition of the most powerful of his followers. The great leader in the War of Independence seems to have understood what later research is proving—that the Anabaptists represented the heart and soul of the people. They, on their part, had the true instinct of national life, recognizing in William of Orange a heaven-sent protector. When they brought him their contributions towards the struggle, he asked them if they made any demand. 'None,' they replied, 'but the friendship of Your Grace, if God grants you the government of the Netherlands.' This friendship, continued by Prince Maurice, secured the Mennonites toleration, and they seemed to have recovered their numbers, which had been thinned by persecution.

"At the close of the seventeenth century, the cities of the Netherlands were full of Mennonites, who had their public assemblies, and an absolute liberty of exercising their religion."

Whether these Anabaptists in Holland own the "succession" of the fanatics of Munster is probably a question on which we should be glad if some of our scholars would express an opinion. But surely these Anabaptists of Holland were meek, humble, blameless Christians, and the persecutions which they suffered at the hands apparently of Catholics and Reformed, were absolutely without palliation.

Even after they had left Holland, and had reached what they supposed was a land of liberty, these persecutions did not cease. Dr. Cathcart, in his invaluable Baptist Encyclopedia, says: "In 1575, under Elizabeth, a congregation of Dutch Baptists was found in London, 27 of whom were cast into prison and two given to the flames. For, the author of the 'Book of Martyrs,' made an earnest appeal to Queen Elizabeth for these humble and helpless servants of the Saviour; but her Majesty would not listen to the voice of mercy."

— God drives the universe with a stiff rein. Events do not go slipshod. Things do not merely happen so. With God there are no disappointments, no surprises, no accidents. The designs of God are never caught in disbabile. In all the Book of God's Providence there is not one "if." I am far from being a fatalist, but I would be wretched indeed if I did not suppose that God arranges everything that pertains to me and to mine. You may ask me a hundred questions I cannot answer about this theory, nor can any man answer them; but I shall believe until the day of my death that no pang ever seizes me but God decides when it shall come and when it shall go, and that I am over-arched by unerring care, and that though the heavens may fall, and the earth may burn, and the judgment may thunder, and eternity may roll, if I am God's child, not so much as a hair shall fall from my head, or a shadow drop on my path, or a sorrow transfix my heart, but to the very last particular it shall be under my Father's arrangement. He bottles our tears. He catches our sighs. And to the orphan He will be a Father, and to the widow He will be a Husband; and to the outcast He will be a Home, and to the poorest wretch that to-day crawls out of the ditch of his abominations, crying for mercy, He will be an all-pardoning Redeemer. The rocks will turn gray with age, the forests will be unmoored in the hurricane, the sun will shut its fiery eyelid, the stars will drop like blasted figs, the sea will heave its last groan and lash itself into expiring agony, the continents will drop like anchors in the deep, the world will wrap itself in sheet of flame and leap on the funeral pyre of the judgment day; but God's love will never die. It shall kindle its suns after all other lights have gone out. It will be a billowing sea after all other oceans have wept themselves away. It will warm itself by the blaze of a consuming world. It will sing while the archangel's trumpet peals and the air is filled with the crash of breaking sepulchres and the rush of the wings of the rising dead.—*Talmage, in Observer.*

O. E. Comstock, Caledonia, Minn., writes: "I was suffering the most excruciating pain from inflammatory rheumatism. One application of *Dr. Thomas' Eclectric Oil* afforded almost instant relief, and two bottles effected a permanent cure."

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