

THE UNCONCEALABLE CHRIST

"And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid." Mark 7:24.

Many of Christ's own countrymen were offended by His teachings. Herod was suspicious of Him. The scribes and the Pharisees were increasingly opposed to Him. They did not attempt to conceal the fact that they hated Christ.

Knowing that the time had not arrived for Him to go to the cross, but recognizing the danger involved in all of this, our Lord withdrew temporarily from Galilee and went into the Gentile territory around the coastal city of Tyre.

Christ went into that region primarily because He was weary and tired, and both needed some rest and wanted to get it. This tells us of His genuine humanity. Nature did not spare Him. He knew what it was to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Our Lord also wanted to get away from the crowds and go into a quiet spot where He could enjoy a season of uninterrupted communion with the Father. This was, as you know, His way of strengthening His stakes in order that He might lengthen His cords. It was such a relief to Christ to get away from the scribes and the Pharisees, who insisted on His conforming to their traditions in even the most minute details.

It so happened that this journey of Christ into this new territory was the longest one which our Lord ever made. For good reasons He wanted to be alone, and did not want anybody to know where He was. Therefore, He humbly and quietly entered a house for the purpose of concealing Himself. His desire to keep anybody from knowing that He had entered this house was not due to any shame or any fear on His part, but He simply wanted to go into seclusion and remain there for a while. Neither then, nor at any other time, did Christ strive for any recognition. He merely wanted to be alone, and rest, and pray.

One would have thought that it would have been easy for Christ to conceal Himself within the borders of the Gentiles, a place where He had never been. Noiselessly and without telling anybody where He was going, Christ stole away from His disciples and from the crowds which had been following Him, and entered an house, but there were those who recognized Him. Their recognition of Christ made a deep and abiding impression on the minds of His watchful disciples.

No other person ever created such an interest as did the Christ. Wherever He went, the crowds followed Him. He was talked about in the palaces. He was the subject of conversation in the cottages. There were some who admired, appreciated and loved Him, but there were many more who scorned Him, and who wished that He were dead. However, there were not any who were indifferent to Him. It was not just His miracles of healing the sick and the suffering that caused all of this interest in Him, even though these remarkable deeds did deepen the impression which He made. Nor was it just the wonder of His speech, although the charm of it was irresistible, for "Never man spake like this man." Rather, it was the conviction, born they knew not how, and spreading mysteriously and steadily, that here was One Who stood apart from and above all others, and in whose being there were unfathomable depths. There was something about Him that suggested His deity, and men, detecting it, were awed. Even though He was among total strangers, there were those who recognized Him as the Christ, who were drawn to Him, who besought Him, who were blessed by Him, and who fell in love with Him.

Christ could not be concealed in the realm of His own humanity. He was born in a

stable that served its unromantic purpose as an adjunct to a roadside inn. His mother and His foster father were peasant folk, without title or treasure. Neither office nor wealth came His way. The theologians, and those who rated themselves as intellectuals, scoffed at His lack of formal training.

All of this comes to a sharp focus in a passage which Mark records earlier in the gospel which bears his name. He tells us that Christ turned to a man who lay before Him in a helpless condition, due to palsy, and said: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The teachers of the law were infuriated by that statement of our Lord. Growling their blind protest, they asked, "Why doth this man speak blasphemies?" Note their description of Christ: "This man!" That is all they saw in Him -- just a man.

But with multitudes of others it was not thus. They knew that He was somehow more than a mere man, yea, even more than an extraordinarily good man. His life was shere purity, without a single smudge or stain on it. His words rang with the music of heaven, and when men heard it the discords of earth died away, at least momentarily. His deeds, even when they were not especially exceptional or outstanding, were done in an extraordinary manner; and sometimes they rose suddenly to overwhelming heights. When, for example He stilled the raging tempests on the Sea of Galilee and levelled the wild waves with His calm voice, the disciples exclaimed: "Who then is this, that even the winds and the waves obey him?"

Our Lord went into that house, seeking to get away from people, but He could not be concealed. There was something about Him which caused others to recognize Him for what He was. And it is well for us to remember that He is "the same yesterday and today and for ever." Jesus Christ can never be concealed. He is the Rose of Sharon, and wherever that Rose is placed, it fills all the vicinity with its sweet perfume. His name is an ointment poured out, and the ointment bewrayeth itself wherever it is poured out. Christ cannot be hidden anywhere.

Christ can never be concealed in history. He made a deep and lasting impression on many who resided in Galilee and Judea in that far-off day in which He lived and wrought among men. Many a man has appeared large in the inflated estimate of his contemporaries, only to be dwarfed by the more searching judgment of posterity. Suppose the Master was for a time the topic of conversation wherever the people gathered. After all, Palestine was only a tight little province tucked away in one corner of the vast Roman Empire. And suppose that historians, writing about the events of the first century, did find it necessary to chronicle the brief life of a young Jew Who claimed to be the Messiah, what bearing could or would that have on the life and the interest of the people who would be living one or two thousand years later?

Christ could not be concealed. Some tried to hide Him by ignoring Him, but He can never be ignored. Some tried it by persecution, but that was powerless to do it. They tried to hide Him in the cloak of ridicule, wrapping Him in derision; but the more they tried it, the more He silently showed Himself as a King. Where no philosopher had ever entered, Christ entered with His power and His grace. The verdict of all the centuries is this, there is that in Jesus Christ which is irrepressible.

Men belong to their age, but Christ belongs to the ages. Others grow weary in their march across the fields of time. They soon exhaust themselves. They faint and fall. Christ marches on with unwearied stride -- never showing any signs of weakness. Herod was eaten by worms; Christ is worshipped by millions. History, so far from obscuring Him, now floodlights Him as the Master-Figure of all time. He could not be hidden in history.

Think of Christ's life on earth. How true and yet how surprising are the words, "He could not be hid." When we think of the obscure origin of Christ, of the humble associations of His life, of the social obscurities which characterized Him, of the startling absence of anything like self-advertising in His work, of the influential enemies whom He incurred, and of the unstable friendships which He contracted, we wonder more and more how these words could be true, "He could not be hid." For these are the things which ordinarily hide men and women -- lowly birth, obscure surroundings, strong enmities, and weak friendships. Despite these things about Christ, the high-born and the rich came to Him, either openly, as did the young ruler, or under the cover of night, like Nicodemus, to talk with Him concerning the deepest things in their being. The whole of "that sweet story of old" is a record of the fact that Christ was constantly recognized by men.

Christ cannot be concealed in the life of a Christian. If Christ has really been admitted to a man's heart, He cannot be concealed there. He will be recognized as the author of a transformed ideal. If Christ is really living in you, you will no longer be content to live for the things you used to live for prior to the time that He saved you. Then you lived for the mere gratification of your own tastes and desires. The real test of life is not the things on which we live, but that for which we live.

When Christ lives in us, we begin to live for that for which He lived. We begin to love that which we did not care about previously; and at the same time we cease to love the things which hitherto enchanted and enchained us. You may know whether or not Christ is really the Lord of your life by putting to yourself this simple question, "Do I live to please Him?" Furthermore, if Christ lives in you, it will be evidenced by a transformed character.

If Christ has really come into your heart and life, there will be a victorious conflict. The life in which Christ dwells is never free from temptation, just as His own life on earth was never free from temptation. Nor is it free from perplexity. You will have to fight against constantly recurring suggestions to go with the multitudes instead of with the Master. But you will not have to fight by yourself. Your hand will grasp the sword, but His hand will grasp yours. If you stand with Christ and remain loyal to Him, He will enable you to be victorious. If Christ dwells within, you will be able to render unselfish service. Your life will be an open book in which others will see the power and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (II Corinthians 3:3). That is one of the most breathtaking statements that was ever made about Christians. So far as we know, Christ never wrote a book. The only volume He is interested in publishing is one that always comes in the rare binding of flesh and blood -- your redeemed life and mine. Here, then, is the question that should stab us: Is my life concealing Christ or revealing Him? If I knowingly conceal Him, then I cannot prove that He is mine. He cannot -- He will not -- be hid!

Think of Robert Morrison pioneering the cause of missions in China. Before the Chinese were able to read the Holy Bible, they could read Robert Morrison; and what they read spelled C-H-R-I-S-T. Think of David Brainerd, dedicating himself to the winning of the American Indians to Christ. Before they could read the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians -- that matchless passage on love -- they could read David Brainerd; and

what they read spelled L-O-V-E. Think of James Chalmers, risking everything to take the gospel of Christ up the Fly River country to the cannibals of New Guinea. Before those tatooed pagans, who finally killed him, could read the story of the crucifixion of Christ, they could read James Chalmers; and what they read spelled S-A-C-R-I-F-I-C-E.

Think, if you will, of the mother-in-law of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. It has frequently been reported that Madame Chiang was the one who led the Generalissimo to Christ. But she at least will not have it so. She says, "It was my mother's example and personal influence that led him to become a Christian." How little that mother-in-law dreamed that her quiet, prayerful witness for Christ was to mark the turning point in the life of the man who should one day set before a whole world's admiring gaze a pattern of high Christian faith and extraordinary Christian statesmanship! In her, Christ could not be hid! No more can He be hid in you, if in truth He dwells in your heart.