

THE MISSION OF CHRIST

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Luke 19:10.

This verse announces the coming into the world of the most outstanding figure in human history, namely, Jesus Christ. His life made the greatest impression for good of any person who ever lived.

I. The Person.

The uniqueness of His title, the Son of Man, calls for a consideration of His Person. This supremely significant name, the Son of Man, was of His own choosing. It is used eighty-five times in the four Gospels. It speaks of His real and living union with humanity. He walked as a man. He slept as a man. He suffered as a man. As the cold chills us, so it chilled Him. As heat from a fire warms us, so it warmed Him. As betrayal exasperates us, so it exasperated Him.

His divine side was just as real as was the human side of His Person. Jesus Christ was the God-Man. Hyphen never meant so much. If He had been man first, He could not have become God, but since He was God first He could and did become man. His humanity touched the cradle and the grave. His divinity touched earth and heaven.

"In Jesus, divine omnipotence moved in a human arm. In Jesus, divine wisdom was cradled in a human brain. In Jesus, divine love throbbed in a human heart. In Jesus, divine love glowed in human eyes. In Jesus, divine grace poured forth in human lips. Jesus was the mind of God thinking out. Jesus was the heart of God throbbing out. Jesus was the hands of God reaching out. Jesus was the feet of God walking out. Jesus was the eyes of God looking out. Jesus was the ears of God listening. Jesus was the Person of God in human clothes. Jesus was perfect manhood and holy Godhood in one glorious personality."

II. The Program.

"The Son of man is come." Yes, but why? Why did He come to that remote village atop the Judean hills? Why did He come by motherhood's painful toil, by way of the manger in the stable of the lowing cattle, by star light while shepherds kept their night vigils; come to a woman's heart of love, and a king's heart of hate; come to a world so lacking in hospitality as to afford Him only a borrowed manger at His birth, and a borrowed tomb at His death? Our text answers these question. It says: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

What a tremendous lot is contained in that small word "lost"! All the tragedies of a lost war, all the pathos of a lost friend, all the anxiety and distress of a lost child, and all the disappointment of a lost cause are included. The Word of God says, "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." Oh, what a world of sadness and of misery is wrapped up in that one word -- lost!

Because of the lost condition of people Christ came into the world. He was not forced or compelled to come. Willingly He came, and, how I delight to proclaim

that glorious fact. Christ came from a place of brightness and beauty. Its chief characteristics were holiness and happiness. There was not any darkness, sin, or sorrow there. There was abundance without want, joy without any pain, and life without death. The blessed Son of God was enthroned in the affections of the heavenly host. The smile of His approval filled them with delight. As they crowded around Him they adored Him as the fairest among ten thousand. He came into this world which was lost in darkness and sin. Everywhere He looked He saw people in confusion. The cord of love, which was intended to bind them to the throne of God, was broken and they were wandering in sin. Men were precious in His eyes, so He came to die for them in order that they might be saved.

It is always a pleasure for anyone of discernment to observe a master workman at his work, to notice his skill, how he accomplishes the task with precision. It is so much more inspiring than to see the bungling workman, who scarcely knows what he is about to do, and whose work no one admires, nor would care much about possessing when it is finished. Our Lord Jesus was, and still is, of course, a Master Workman, and He tells us in our scriptural narrative what He came into the world to do. He came to "seek and to save that which is lost."

Here in this chapter we have an inspired account of His doing what He came to do, how He saved a sinner, and brought salvation to his house. Christ came down from heaven. Why did He come into this world? He came to seek the lost, who, of course, could not seek Him. Men could not build a ladder by which they could climb to heaven. But grace dropped a ladder from heaven to earth when Christ came.

With the throngs from Galilee Christ was making His last pilgrimage to the Passover. Among the crowds accompanying Him were His disciples, Pharisees, and many of the common people. Prior to His arrival, word had spread throughout Jericho that Jesus of Nazareth, the great miracle-worker, was to pass through the city that day. In their excitement and their desire to see Him the people crowded the streets. In their eagerness to see Christ, they pushed and jostled each other in order to gain a place of vantage.

Since Christ was the most talked about person in that day, Zacchaeus, the rich extortionist, the chief publican, and a social outcast, resolved that he would go and see this Man Who had gained such a reputation for kindness and helpfulness to others. It was not easy for him to accomplish that noble purpose because of the multitude surrounding the Saviour and his own smallness of stature. But, he was not a person to be blocked by difficulties. In spite of all the obstacles in his way, he determined to see Christ. Like a boy, Zacchaeus ran ahead of the crowd in the procession, went out on the road to Jerusalem, reached up to one of the low overhanging limbs on a sycamore tree, pulled himself up and got located where he could get a splendid view of Christ.

Never was this little man more surprised than when the Saviour arrived at the tree which he had ascended, stopped, looked up at him, and said "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house." This per-

sonal call from Christ indicated that He knew the name, nature, thoughts, condition, and need of Zacchaeus. When Christ singled him out, addressed him by name, and invited Himself to go home with Zacchaeus, it shocked him to think that here is One Who sees me, knows me, cares for me, wants, and needs me. Acting as though he thought he might never have that opportunity again, Zacchaeus quickly came down from that tree and joyously received Christ into his home. He received as a guest in his home the Christ Whom the world coldly received on a pallet of straw in a stable at Bethlehem and then cruelly thrust Him out on the point of a spear at Jerusalem. Acceptance of the hospitality of Zacchaeus by Christ awakened in the multitude a murmuring long and loud. God's Word says: "They all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner." Although His act provoked harsh criticism and created bitter opposition on the part of the bystanders, Christ disregarded and ignored both and proceeded to the home of Zacchaeus.

While the Lord Jesus fed His body on the bread provided by Zacchaeus, He fed the soul of His host on the bread of heaven. He was gloriously saved, and a marvelous change was wrought in him. He declared that he would make amends for all of his past wrongs. His conversion changed his estimate of the value of money and his idea about honesty with God. He declared that he would make fourfold restitution of anything which he had acquired fraudulently, and that he would give half of his possessions to the poor. Zacchaeus' conviction of sin, unfeigned repentance, reception of Christ, confession of Him, restitution of possessions, joy of heart, and reformation of life proved that he had been saved.

In every case when and where a soul is saved, the initiative has been with the Lord. Nothing happens until God begins. There are many ways in which the Saviour seeks the lost. He came on a long journey in search of us. The wonder, the mystery, and the glory of this tremendous fact are not fully appreciated by us. One cannot get away from the Lord. When He sets out to seek a man He will certainly find him. He will order your circumstances so that you will come into a place where He can deal with you. We delight to sing, "Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God." He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." There was something to save, something precious in the sight of the Lord, and that was the soul of the sinner. The salvation of a human soul from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from Satan to God, and from hell to heaven, is the greatest work that was ever accomplished in this world.

Men need salvation, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" We have only to examine our own hearts, or to observe others, or to look into the Word of God to find that our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; but God, instead of pouring out His wrath upon us, has graciously opened up a way for our escape and our salvation. He has provided for us a great salvation, and He offers it to us as a gift. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." No sins are of too deep a dye for His precious blood to cleanse. He is able to save to the uttermost all who will come unto God by Him. When we believe on Christ as our Saviour, He saves us on the basis of the atoning merits of His shed blood.

Christ came to save. He did not come to try to save. Our Lord never tries anything. He is not an experimenter. What He sets out to do, He always accomplishes. Christ never fails. Since He has succeeded in other things, why shouldn't Christ succeed in saving? He came to save. He is able to save. He is determined to save. He will save all who trust Him. If you who are still unsaved will repent of your sins and exercise faith in Christ, He will save you now.