

"HE WAS THERE ALONE"

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone." Matthew 14:23.

More than nineteen hundred years ago God walked and talked with men as Jesus Christ. Of Him it is written: "This is the true God." I John 5:20. But Jesus Christ was also man. We read of Him, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:1, 14. He became a partaker of flesh and blood; He took upon Himself our nature; He became one of us. "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:16-18.

The incarnation was by way of the virgin birth. God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, to be born in a stall and cradled in a manger. He was a baby, a boy, a man. He drank, He ate, He slept, He walked, He talked, He worked and He sorrowed, just as we do.

Our text states that "He was alone." This has reference to Him alone in the mountain, praying. But this text may be written over His earthly life, for He was lonely. That is one of the peculiarities of His humanity. As somebody said, "His was the solitude of the royal stranger who tarries for a night." Through His whole life, from the manger to the cross, there ran a deep, silent, sad undercurrent of loneliness.

I. Alone in His Singularity.

Jesus Christ is unique. He is the only One of His kind. There never has been another like Him. There is none other like Him. There has never been another incarnation, and there never will be. There has not been but one God-man. It is not enough to say that Jesus Christ was a good man, a great man, a great leader or a great teacher. He was all that, of course, but far more. He was human, yet He was God. There was in Him a duality of nature, yet a singleness of person. There were two natures, but not two persons. Into union with His divine personality God took a human nature. He was never paralleled by any created person. He was in the midst of death--the living One. He was in the midst of darkness--the Light of the world. He was in the midst of sin--the holy One.

II. Alone in His Sinlessness.

Someone has described Jesus Christ as a "white Rose in the midst of a bed of scarlet poppies." Isn't that a vivid picture of our Saviour in the midst of the sinful men of this world? It was true then as now that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." How His sensitive soul must have shrunk from the blasphemy, sin and hypocrisy of His day! His stainless purity could not have any fellowship with the wrongs, sins, impurities and shames of this earth. His own disciples wounded Him again and again. In a sense He had no companions. Men could not be His companions, for they were impure, while He was pure; their aspirations were unholy, while His were always holy; their hearts were full of hate, while His was full of love. Jesus Christ was alone in His sinlessness.

III. Alone in His Solitude.

Jesus Christ loved people who did not love Him. He said, "They hated Me without a cause." He was vitally concerned about people. He called to them, "Come unto Me," but when "He came unto His own, His own received Him not." The leaders of His own nation derided Him. They cried out, "It is not fit that such a fellow should live. Away with Him! Crucify Him!" His own denied Him, sold Him, forsook Him. As He walked the highways His eager eyes scanned the faces of those He met for some sign of a recognition, but He was in the world and it knew Him not.

There isn't anything more depressing, or anything that makes a heart heavier, than to long for those whom you love, only to find them beyond reach or out of touch. Never in all the history of the race did one yearn after a loved one as Christ yearned after men. Full of loneliness is that wail, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23-37. The very people whom He loved, instead of coming to Him and loving Him, they spit upon Him, smote Him, crowned Him with thorns, mocked Him and crucified Him. Oh, the heartache of it! How lonely He was! And He has the same love for and yearning over men today. He still calls to them, "Come unto Me," and they still refuse to come.

Others did not comprehend the mission of the Saviour. When He was born they called His name Jesus, because He was to save His people from their sins, but that did not seem to mean anything to His countrymen.

All through His life His eyes were on the cross. When He spoke of His "Father's business," He referred to the cross. From the very beginning He knew the awful climax of His earthly career: that of shame, pain, anguish and agony beyond human description. He did not have any human companion who understood. He was alone. His heart must have yearned for sympathy, but He did not find any.

He was misunderstood at every turn. His own people were blind to His mission. They thought only of temporal glory, and not of redemption. They knew that their scriptures declared of the Messiah that "The government shall be upon His shoulder." But here was Christ walking through the dust of the land while the enemy rode in chariots, with nowhere to lay His head while His enemies dwelt in palaces. Finally they condemned Him as an impostor and nailed Him to the cross.

Even His own disciples were disappointed in Him. They shared the hopes of their people, and expected Him to go to the throne of David in the overthrow of Rome. Then when He told them that He must suffer, that He must be killed, they rebuked Him, and cried out, "Not so."

And beyond this, even His mother, who knew of His supernatural birth and sinless years, did not seem to understand His course and mission.

It was all of this misunderstanding and rejection and loneliness which culminated in the cross and which inspired the poet to write:

"Have you read the story of the Cross
Where Jesus bled and died;
Where your debt was paid by His precious blood
That flowed from His wounded side?

"Have you read how they placed the crown of thorns
Upon His brow for you.
When He prayed, 'Forgive them, oh, forgive;
They know not what they do?'

"Have you read how He saved the dying thief,
When hanging on the tree,
When He looked with pleading eyes and said,
'Dear Lord, remember Me'?

"Have you read that He looked to heaven and said,
'Tis finished?' 'Twas for thee!'
Have you ever said, 'I thank Thee, Lord,
For giving Thy life for me'?

"He died of a broken heart for you,
He died of a broken heart;
Upon a tree, for you, for me,
He died of a broken heart."

IV. Alone in His Suffering.

Go to Gethsemane and see Him in His anguish. See the manifestation of agony and the bloody sweat. Hear Him cry out to His Heavenly Father. Oh, how He needed sympathy that night! How He longed for the disciples to watch with Him for a little while! And they were asleep! He was alone. They did not comprehend the agony which shook His soul. He was alone.

Then, when He stepped out from beneath the shadow of the old olive trees, He was betrayed by one of His professed friends, and betrayed with a kiss. Then, they all forsook Him and fled. And then Simon Peter swore that he had never known this Man Jesus. What a scene! The Friend of men stood without a friend. He was alone.

He stood alone before the high priest with no one to protest the indignities offered Him. He stood alone before Pilate with not a single one to speak a single word in His defense. Oh, one did carry His cross, but not for love. It was only because he was compelled to do so. Then, when they nailed Him to the cross, what friendly hearts there may have been were lost in the crowd, and He was confronted on every hand by the face of a foe. The crowd milled around the cross, the priests wagged their heads, the rabble mocked and reviled, and the multitude shouted. All were waiting to watch Him die. There was no cry of sympathy anywhere. He was alone.

If that had been all, it might not have been so bad, for others have endured pain, agony and persecution also. But, He was forsaken of God. That is the meaning of that strange cry that pierced the air, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Even God the Father forsook Him. Earth clenched her fist against Him, and heaven was shut up against Him. There was not a look of love, or word of hope, or hand of help. Around the cross were the enemies who shouted hatred at Him, and God above turned away from Him. He was alone. He died alone.

And our sins caused Him to die alone. The sinless One on the cross was made to be sin for us. He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." He was made a "curse for us." He was there "smitten of God, and afflicted" in our stead. He bore what we deserved. No other person could purge our sins. He alone could bear the wrath of God against sin.

ALONE

"It was alone the Saviour prayed
In dark Gethsemane;
Alone He drained the bitter cup
And suffered there for me.

"It was alone the Saviour stood
In Pilate's judgment hall;
Alone the crown of thorns He wore,
Forsaken thus by all.

"Alone upon the cross He hung
That others He might save;
Forsaken then by God and man,
Alone, His life He gave.

"Can you reject such matchless love?
Can you His claim disown?
Come, give your all in gratitude,
Nor leave Him thus alone.

"Alone, alone, He bore it all alone;
He gave Himself to save His own,
He suffered, bled and died,
Alone, alone."