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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning, 12.2.1922

"And the people, when they knew it, followed Him and He received them and spoke unto them of the Kingdom of God and healed them that had need of healing." Luke Chapter 9 verse 11

The history of this is simply contained in the few words in the preceding verse together with this, and the Apostles when they were returned from the mission on which they had been sent, told Him all that they had done, and He took them and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city of Bethsaida and the people when they knew it, followed Him and He received them and spoke unto them of the Kingdom of God and healed them that had need of healing. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve and said unto Him "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about and lodge and get victuals, for we are here in a desert place", but He said unto them "Give ye them to eat" and they said "We have no more than five loaves and two fishes except we should go and buy meat for all this people", for they were about five thousand men. And He said to His disciples "Make them sit down by fifties in a company" and they did so and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and break, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude and they did eat and were all filled and there was taken up of the fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

Here we have the compassionate Lord Jesus Christ. He had sent His disciples on a mission to go and preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. They went and returned having done what He commanded them, and told Him all that they had done. He took them aside privately, that they might rest awhile, to a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida, and the people knew this, and were attracted to Him, for though He was despised of the doctors and lawyers and scribes and pharisees, the people were attracted to Him, and when they knew that He had gone away into this desert place, they followed Him. He, instead of, as some of us would have done, being weary, send them away, repel them, He received them. And He received them and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God and healed them that had need of healing. There are several points in this text to which I would call your attention. Leaving the natural part, and coming to what may be signified. The first is this, that the people followed Him. They had some knowledge of where He was, and they were attracted to Him and went after Him. The second point is, His kind reception of them - "And He received them" The third point is, He preached to them, and spoke unto them

of the Kingdom of God and the fourth point is that He healed them that had need of healing.

Here are matters for consideration. The first is this, that there is, to all the people of God, whatever state they may feel to be in, an attraction in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they do receive some knowledge of where He is, and that knowledge, that attraction, infallibly brings them to follow Him. They must go after their hearts. Well, let us notice this point. There is in Christ an attraction; there is in Him that attraction that results from faith in Him, that tells them that whatever they need is in Him, that whatever their case may be, He can meet it, whatever their wants are, He can supply them, whatever their sins are, He is able to forgive them. My dear friends, God has set the sun in the heavens, the great light to rule the day and His light is a drawing light. God has set Christ in the firmament of the covenant of grace, and He is, and He ever will be the centre and the circumference of the desire of a child of God, and the language of each one born of the Spirit is "Give me Christ or else I die". That, not at the beginning only, but always, and there are given inklings, intimations, knowledge of where Jesus Christ is. The scriptures tell us distinctly, and the Spirit of Christ does also with more or less distinctness, drop upon the heart, intimations which are in exact accordance with the scripture teaching on this point. The scripture tells us that He is now exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, exalted at the right hand of God, for to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins. If His Person, and His position, and His great office and work do not draw us, it is because we are dead in trespasses and sins, but if we live His life, notwithstanding all the doubts and fears and questions that there may be in us, we shall find ourselves drawn, and being drawn; we shall follow after Him. The prayer of the church of old is "Draw me, we will run after Thee" When He was on Jordan's bank, Jesus Christ was an attraction, and two of John's disciples saw Him, after John had pointed Him out as the Lamb of God, and followed Him, and He turned to them and asked what they sought. They said, "Master, where dwellest Thou" They were willing to leave John their leader, and master, and follow Him, who became to them greater than John. He was the one of whom John spake saying "He that cometh after me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose, He is preferred before me" and you will find if born again, and needing Christ, and the Spirit of God gives intimations to you about Him, though they may not be to your satisfaction, that you are drawn, invincibly drawn; that there is that in Jesus Christ that is more to you than the whole world could possibly be; that the attraction is such that you would willingly, if called upon, at times, part with everything you have, that you might find Him. "Tell me" is the language of the living, loving, soul, "Tell me where Thou feedest, where Thou restest, where Thou dost reside" What for, empty curiosity? No. That we may find Thee to be our life, and our all, our Saviour; that we may find Thee to be the Lamb of God for us; the way to God for us; the strength of God in us; the life

of God in us; the light of God in us; that we may find Thee to be to and in us all and in all.

To be a follower of Christ then is a great matter. A follower of the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. God notices this point in a christian's experience. He notices it in Israel of old and said to her "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown"; when a barren wilderness did not deter you from following Me. What a great thing it is to follow Christ, a great Saviour, a wondrous Son, the Sun of Righteousness, the Healer of the sick, the Life of the dead, the Light of the blind, the Strength of the feeble, the Salvation of the lost. Now, examine yourselves on this point, my dear hearers, did you ever feel drawn to Christ? Did you ever see Him by faith to be the new and living way whereby you might approach the living God? That precious blood which He shed, did you ever get a sight of? Having boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way. Blood tracks the path; blood says the guiltiest may come; it says that it speaks better things than that of Abel. That is the first point and do not pass it by thoughtlessly, but examine yourselves and see if you really have ever felt attracted to the Lord Jesus Christ. This people were not ignorant of what was said against Him, and you may not be ignorant of temptations against Christ, of the vile suspicions that your own hearts and the devil with you will cast upon Him. You may not be ignorant of many dreadful thoughts about Christ, but with them all, do you feel drawn to Him? Ruth said to Naomi "Entreat me not to leave thee nor from following after thee"

The second point is, that He received them kindly, received these followers of Him. Christ does receive sinners. It was to the pharisees and scribes, a reproach to Him "This man" said they murmuringly, "receiveth sinners and eateth with them" What a mercy it is true. What a mercy it is that He does not cast off poor sinners who follow Him. We shall be followers of Christ as long as we live if we belong to Him, and we shall find that suited to us that was uttered by the people of God who had fallen by their iniquity, but who now had come to their senses, and were directed by the Lord what to do - "Take with you words and turn to the Lord and say unto Him "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously" That is what He does, He received them. We deserve to be repelled; we deserve that He should say He would have nothing to do with us; that He should turn from us, and spurn us from His footstool if we ventured to approach to that footstool, but that is not His way with sinners. He says "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden" He says "I am come to save the lost. I am come, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life, a ransom for many," and when one goes with the chains of sin, and the conviction of sin, and the weariness of sin, and the burden of guilt, with many other things, to Him, this compassionate Saviour, instead of, as the fear of the heart says, and tells you, repelling you, He receives you. He takes a

sinner to Himself, takes Him to His bosom, takes Him and brings Him into the banqueting house, takes him and discovers to him the greatness of redeeming love, the efficacy of cleansing blood. He received them. He had gone into a private place; he had gone into a desert and was going to speak to His disciples privately, and this people, shall one say, intruded upon His privacy, Notwithstanding that, He received them, looked on them kindly as if He should say "What is it that you seek? Well, did you ever get this experience? Did the Lord Jesus ever condescend to give you a smile, a welcome, to let you know that you were not an intruder, not an unwelcome person to Him? Did He ever drop one single word upon your spirit, whereby you would know that He welcomed you to the throne of His heavenly grace, that you were welcome to pray, and to make known your requests, to confess the worst of your condition as you felt it, that His blood could cleanse the blackest soul, and wash away each stain, that His heart was large enough, and loving enough and tender enough to receive you? This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them, that is; through Him you must have access to the Father, by Him you must be righteous, and holy and fit for the presence of God. This is a very pleasant point in true experience, that Christ does not repel a coming, seeking, sinner; that there are no failings, there is no guilt that will ever make Him turn away from a coming sinner. All the afflictions of the way, and the temptations of Satan, and the deformity of fallen nature, can never turn His heart away from one who seeks His face. It is a great thing that the scripture declares "The Son of Man came to save that which was lost"; came for that very purpose and therefore could you think, would it be possible, that He should turn away from one of those whom He came to save? That, drawing one by His secret teaching and His Spirit, He should turn away that coming one? He gives intimations of His kindness to sinners, yes, not once only, but always; not at the beginning only, but always. I do not speak of the first work only, but it is a continual experience with the people of God, that when they are in necessity, when they cry to Him, when there is none left (and there is none shut up or left) nor any helper, then led to Him He welcomes them. Thou art welcome sinner. The vilest sinner out of hell is welcome to the throne of grace with his chains and his troubles, and his confessions and his petitions, he is welcome to this blessed Saviour. Conditions do not exist here, except that we must be bad enough for Christ and that, if one may use the word, condition, in respect to it, is given by the Spirit; this given. Tis a great thing to be received by Christ.

The third point is this; that He spoke unto them of the Kingdom of God, began to preach to them, and this preaching would preach down human nature. A great point; human nature is a strong, living thing in us, but we are to learn this, that the Kingdom of God is of another nature altogether, and different from that which we have in us. My kingdom is not of this world.

He preaches down everything that we prize of human goodness and legal attainments, and all that kind of thing that we would be glad enough to take to Him. Legality in us is as strong as any sin, and would make Christ a debtor always, but Christ preaches the kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace, the reign of grace, the precious blood of atonement, the justifying righteousness of Christ, the acceptance of sinners in Him. This is that which always is preached when Christ is the preacher. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Now let us look at two or three points that are certainly preached into the hearts of coming sinners, to sinners who are received by Christ.

First the love of God. The love of God, love stronger than death; it cannot be purchased by gold and silver; it cannot be drowned by floods of sin and evil. Love brought Him from heaven to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to show Himself alive to His disciples, and from that wondrous work of discovery, in heaven to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high. O the love of Christ. When He preaches that the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many, that is wonderful preaching, and the Spirit preaches it with conviction in the heart, so that the sinner who thus is taught knows something of the eternal love of God. The love of God is made known in the person of Christ, and never beyond that, or outside that. The love of God is in Him. "It pleased the Father that in Him all the fulness of eternal love should dwell". This love runs in the channel of election. It ran, in the first place, if one may speak so, to the very Lord of life and glory. "Behold My Servant, Mine Elect" This is Christ, and this flows down into sinners' hearts, when the preaching of the Spirit is there, when He brings, that is to say, a real, powerful, sensation of the love of Christ. That is good preaching. Jesus spoke unto these received people, of the kingdom of God. That makes God great; it makes Him first, and mind this point, if you get a right preaching into your hearts, God will be first, nature will go down, and God will go up. He must increase is John's doctrine, I must decrease, is John's feeling, and that will be the doctrine you will receive and the feeling you will entertain. Christ must go up; up He will rise in His person; Christ must go up in your estimation and in the measure in which He rises, will be the measure of your going down in your own estimation. He preached the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God is forgiveness; this must be preached. Every minister sent to preach will always be preaching the forgiveness of sin. Through this Man is preached the forgiveness of sins. We need it daily; some of us have not heard it at all preached into our hearts; some of us want it. Doubtless you believe this, and say out of your own experience, this is precisely the point. Well, you may not have it preached to you. The minister can speak of it, but only the Holy Ghost can convince you of it. That is to say, He, and He alone, can speak it on your hearts.

The very words of God must come in the power and spirit of them right into your souls, and then you will understand what the forgiveness of sins is. Men talk about religion; the saints want to feel forgiven; Men may be pleased with religion, but the sinner wants forgiveness; he wants it in his own heart; he wants to feel it there, and so feel the peace of God within him which passeth all understanding. Jesus Christ preached this; that ye may know the Son of Man hath power to forgive sin, He said to the sick of the palsy "Arise, take up thy bed and walk". On occasions you remember He said to individual persons "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee" Now this speaking of forgiveness is a very wonderful thing. It comes as a distinct communication from heaven to a sinner's soul. The Apostle Paul speaks of it when he says "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin" "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Pray that the Lord may save us from being pleased with religion and satisfied without pardon. True religion is a beautiful thing; true religion is the life of God in the soul, but true gracious experience has this in it, sooner or later, forgiveness, and when one has received it, then if guilt is contracted again, it is needful to have again an application of the blood of Christ. Beware of being carried away with the dreadful error, that once forgiven in your own profession, you need no more. If you sin you need again to be pardoned, sins past, sins present, sins to come will, as felt, bring you to need and seek this forgiveness spoken on your heart from time to time. Sin is darkness, and the kingdom of God is light; sin is guilt, and that is death, and the kingdom of God is life. Sin is pollution, and the kingdom of God is holiness, so if you have this kingdom preached to you, you will have that great matter made known in your heart - the forgiveness of sin and the sanctification of your conscience.

In the kingdom of God is the presence of God and the presence of God means communion. Communion must be between two or more parties. God will speak always the first; God will give always the first; Communion is a partaking, and a participating of things which are common, and when a sinner has communion with God, He receives something from God, participates in the blessings of the everlasting covenant, participates in the precious virtue, efficacy and power of the blood of Christ, and participates as Christ Himself teaches, in the gospel according to John thus - Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". Now when a man, poor, guilty, miserable man, receives the Son of God by distinct manifestation of the Spirit, he eats His flesh, he drinks His blood, he receives the Saviour, he receives the atonement, and he lives thereby

and he will never die.. "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life". In the kingdom of God are these great points; see if you know them or if you do not know them as you wish, see if your hearts are made earnest in seeking to know them. My dear friends, the coming soul receives it sooner or later. Beware I say of resting short of this. Beware I say of resting in your desires. If you are born again you will be so hungry for God at times, as that nothing will give you rest but a discovery of Him, and if you have had that discovery and lost the sweetness and the sense of it, then the only satisfaction that you can have will be this - a fresh discovery. He spoke unto them of the kingdom of God, and in the next and last place - "and healed them that had need of healing" Diseased people, lepers, palsied people, these were healed. It is not specified in the text, the kinds of diseases, but we know from other scriptures the diseases that the Lord Jesus spoke to, rebuked and healed people of. Now have you got some dire calamity or disease? Are you a poor palsied creature, who cannot hold out the hand of faith? Well, the Lord Jesus has but to say "Reach hither thy hand, stretch out that palsied hand" A man might say it to you and you could not move it. If the God of grace says it, you will move your hand, for He will put power into it at once. The hand of faith must be strengthened by Christ, but there are these diseases which I will name, can only name, briefly. There is the dreadful disease of unbelief; only a believer knows what that is. "Lord I believe, help my unbelief". That unbelief is the chief of all our sins. "If unbelief's that sin accursed, abhorred by God above, because of all opposers worst it fights against His love, how can a heart that doubts like mine, dismayed at every breath, pretend to live the life divine or fight the fight of faith"? and what can you do with it. Chide your unbelieving heart, still it is there. Say to yourself, O how gross your unbelief is in the face of all that God has done; still it is there. Take to yourself, as you justly may and will, all blame for your barrenness, and all that crippled condition of yours, through unbelief, still it is there. You must be healed, healed by the Good Physician, who never fails in a case He takes up. What will heal this disease? A glimpse of Christ, a whisper of His love, a touch of His power, the smile of His face. Yes, infallibly the soul is healed in that way by Jesus Christ.

Take the disease of enmity, a foul disease this; it is in us. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The child of God knows it. The offence he takes when God pleases him not in providence, he painfully knows. Who can heal this enmity? Jesus Christ. How? Why, He is the God of love, and when he lets down a little of His precious, eternal love into a sinner's heart, why at once he loves the Lord with mind and heart, follows Him in sweet, humble affection and chides with himself and hates himself, for the enmity that He has felt working.

Take the disease of prayerlessness, neglect of the throne of God's heavenly grace. It is not more natural for us to breathe than it is for us to depart from the living God. We do need the exhortation "Take heed lest ye be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" The Lord alone can heal this. And the base ingratitude of our nature, who can heal this, so as to move us to go with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, even the fruit of our lips, praising God for His great mercies? And the worldliness of our minds, the natural tendency of our hearts to turn to that world which we have within us, as well as without, who can heal us of this? And our base ingratitude, the unthankfulness? A great word that, and do not forget that it is one of the characteristics of the ungodly, unthankful, unholy, and you, feeling your ingratitude may sometimes look at that scripture and say to yourself - why I have got a mark of a reprobate on me. I have a characteristic of the ungodly on me and in me, unthankful. I receive mercies, without acknowledgement, I enjoy them without thankfulness, and I murmur if I lose a single one. Unthankful. You have need of healing. What, a person who has come to Christ? Yes, has need of healing. "And healed them all". And healed them that had need of healing. These are some of our complaints, of our diseases. O Leprous sinners, none can heal but Christ Himself. He healed them that had need of healing. Can you come under that word, need? Do you really need, that is, feel that you need the healing which the Lord Jesus Christ can give? May then this word be an encouragement unto us, that whereas Christ went to be for a moment alone, this people came and intruded upon Him. May we be encouraged to go at all times, and in all conditions, to this ever kind, gracious Lord Jesus, and as He received them so mercifully, may we go, hoping that He will receive us mercifully, and as He became a preacher to them, preaching forgiveness of sins, may we be encouraged to go and ask Him to take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, and as He proved Himself to be the Good Physician to them, may we be encouraged to take our diseases to Him and ask Him graciously and effectively to say in us "I will, be thou clean".