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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 29 August 1920

MATTHEW 3 v 17

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This
is My beloved Son, in whom I am well
pleased"

It is the will of God that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. It is the will of God that His children should perceive that all blessings are stored up in Christ; all spiritual blessings in heavenly places are in Christ, His only begotten Son. Therefore if we do not honour Christ, if we do not perceive that justification and sanctification and wisdom, reconciliation to God, adoption into His family, are all blessings in, and must be received from, Jesus Christ, it is an evidence that, up to this time, we are ignorant of God's plan of salvation and, although there are many subjects of which we can be ignorant with little or no inconvenience, we cannot be ignorant of Christ, we cannot die ignorant of Christ, without the most terrible and abiding, even everlasting, inconvenience. The scene before us is intensely interesting and to a spiritual mind attractive, for the Trinity is here. Let me draw your attention to this. Jesus was now baptized, He was come up from the water and, as Luke tells us, He was praying and the heavens opened and he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. This was His anointing; this was that gift of the Father to Him without measure in this especial hour, for the public work which He now was entered upon. And if we belong to Christ that same Spirit has in some measure descended from Him to us. As the ointment that was upon Aaron's beard and ran down to the skirts of his garment, even so the gift of the Holy Ghost has come upon us if we do belong to, if we do believe in, Jesus Christ. We have that anointing which teacheth us of all things and is truth and is no lie. Notice this, you cannot be true Christians and be destitute of the Spirit, for it is the Spirit who makes a believer, who unites the soul to Christ. It is the Spirit who, brooding upon the face of the waters in creation work, brought order. It is the same Spirit who, brooding

upon a poor sinner in his ignorance and confusion, brings saving knowledge to him. Ah sinner, if you have the Holy Spirit it is a sweet evidence, and will be to you a conclusive proof one day, that you are united to Christ. Then, when this took place, when the heaven was opened and the Spirit came down upon Christ, the Father spoke: "Lo" - a voice from the open heaven, and this voice was heard, heard by Christ - "This is My beloved Son". Whatever men may think of Him, He is My beloved Son. Whatever bitterness men may show to Him, however displeased they may be with Him, however their deep enmity, their profound ignorance, against and of Christ, may come out, I, His eternal Father, who have sent Him into the world, I am pleased with Him. So here we have the Trinity. The Son, the only begotten Son of God, the Son of the Father in truth and love; that only Son. Though God has myriads of sons by adoption, He has only one Son in His own nature, His only begotten Son. We have the Holy Spirit, equal with the Father and the Son in nature, coming down upon Him. Then we have the Father speaking. My beloved friends, to be Trinitarians in spirit, in experience, is an unspeakable mercy. Mark this; the Trinity is here on this great day. The people saw Christ, but the bulk of them saw Him with other eyes than the Father saw Him with. John saw Him, and loved Him, and preached Him. Did you ever see Jesus? Did you ever see Him so as to approve of Him? to be attracted to Him? to believe that He has in Him what the Apostle Paul declares - all the fulness of the Godhead bodily? It is to this Person then, of whom the text speaks, rather of whom the Father speaks, that I would draw your attention this morning. "This is My beloved Son"; that is the declaration of the Father. Then how He regards Him is here declared: "In whom I am well pleased". Be assured of this, my friends, that if the pleasure of the Father respecting Jesus Christ is never made your pleasure, you are wrong. If your eyes never see in Christ what the Father sees in Him, you are wrong. But, if you are brought by the eternal Spirit to see, first your own emptiness of good, and then the fulness of all needed good, that is of grace, in Christ, it may be said to you what Christ said to His disciples: "Blessed are your eyes for they see". It is a wonderful testimony that the Father here bears of His Son, His only begotten Son. He saw in this Person, the Man Christ Jesus then, in the first place, His own nature, His own eternal nature. The Godhead of Christ is essential to salvation; it is essential to faith in order to the building up of a soul for eternal

bliss. The Godhead of Christ was seen by the Father. Ah, it is a terrible thing for a man to see in Christ nothing more than human nature, however exalted he may think that nature to have been and to be. It is a terrible thing to look on Christ and see nothing but human nature in Him. And O, I might exhort you who fear the Lord, to look narrowly into this question. What do you see in Christ? Do you see the divine nature? Do you see the very same nature which the Father saw when He said: "This is My beloved Son". Who could express - no angel could, no man can - the delight of the Father in seeing His ancient promise, the Seed of the woman, on Jordan's bank, a baptised Christ, Almighty God; in seeing there the angel of the covenant, His own chosen One, His own beloved and only begotten Son; eternity, immensity, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, justice in all its stringency, holiness in all its forbidding glory, forbidding to a sinner I mean, mercy in all its attraction, and fulness and freeness, forgiveness in all its sweetness, justification in all its grandeur and glory, here in this Man; and all on this one bottom, this one foundation, the deity of the Lord God in the Man Christ Jesus. Happy the soul that believes in the Deity of Christ with such a faith as to be drawn to Him; who sees in Christ that Deity that makes the soul rejoice. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness". And truly one may say there comes a moment to a child of God when, whether he believes in his interest or not, at that same moment He sees the eternal God in the Man Christ Jesus, the second Person in the adorable Trinity. Well, God looked on that and a wonderful thing it was. Well may we pause here and ask ourselves, with all seriousness and solemnity and examination, whether we do in our consciences believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ. Be assured, you will never get to heaven unless you receive the Godhead of the Man Christ Jesus. You will never, never find a Mediator sufficient for your case, never find one who can remove your dark alienation and your black guilt, but the Man who is also very God. Therefore examine yourselves; see whether you be in the faith or not in this particular. Do I believe that that Man who was crucified on Calvary's tree is Almighty God? That He was God then, God when born of the virgin Mary, holding the world up when His mother held Him up; guiding all things while He was borne of His parents. Almighty God sighed human breath.

In the next place, the Father saw in the Man Christ Jesus, the Man whom He had made strong for Himself; the Man of His right-hand, the Man who was His fellow; these, the Son of God, and the human nature of Christ, comprising One Person, constituting this One Person to be the only Mediator and Saviour, and the Father saw that human nature. United in a bond, never to be dissolved, to Deity, is the sacred humanity born of the virgin Mary. What a delight it must be to the Father to look on this Man, to see in Him the very Person by whom the tribes of Israel, the children of God scattered through all the world abroad, with the Gentiles, embraced in the first promise and embraced distinctly in the covenant that God made with Abraham: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"; to see in that Man the very Person by whom all this divine purpose should be accomplished. And, anointed of the Holy Ghost, the Father saw this Person able for the work. It is a little thing for Him to do in one important and blessed sense. Well, dear friends, this Man I declare to you is the very Son of God and the very Son of Man, only One Person, and in Him centre all blessings, as the Apostle sings in his hymn of praise to God in the Ephesians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which, according to His abundant mercy, hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus according as He hath chosen us in Him". O, the Father saw Him as that Person who would not fail or be discouraged, as He who should be upheld by the Father's power and helped according to the Father's promise and justified in the Spirit although He should be condemned of men. O, the delight of God centred here. All the pleasure of Deity centred here. Good is it to us if our pleasure centres here. O, happy is the sinner who rejoices in the Person of Christ and who sees in Him all that he needs, and all that he desires. Who sees, just in the same Person, the very, very things which the Father saw. We see them imperfectly; we know but in part. Our unacquaintedness with Christ is solemn and painful sometimes to the feeling. The Father knows Him perfectly, but He gives us to know Him a little. "This is My beloved Son", Mine only Son. Alone, coming now from the bosom of the Father into our nature and into our world, this blessed Man stands on Jordan's bank and receives that anointing of the Spirit and hears that voice of the Father that was so comforting to His heart, so good to Him, for now He was to go about doing good, healing all that were sick, and He should not be alone in that, but have the company of His

Father and the society of His Spirit and the help of His Spirit, as Peter says, "God was with Him". "He went about doing good for God was with Him". If you want God's presence, beg of it in this Person. You will have it nowhere else in peace; you will know Him nowhere else in comfort, but in the person of His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah the sight will warm the coldest heart, will melt the hardest feeling, will raise up the most drooping faith, and strengthen the most miserable sinner to hope in God. The sight will instruct the most ignorant and fill the understanding with knowledge. It will bring the sinner to say,

Now I see whate'er betide
All is well if Christ be mine

and that will fix the heart and enable the sinner blessed with such a sight to say: "My heart is fixed; my heart is fixed". You will be a man then with your eye and your heart fixed on Deity clothed in humanity. And majesty divine that must strike a world of sinners into perdition, seen in its nakedness, that majesty, seen clothed in Christ, becomes bearable, becomes attractive, and you want to live near God when you see God in Christ.

And the Father saw, in this very Person, in the next place a perfect representation of Himself, insofar as He will be known by men. He saw in Christ a perfect representation, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person. It is asked in the book of Job: "Canst thou by searching can find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" And O, who could bear it? I believe the unveiled glory of God, if it fell on a world of sinners, would dash them all to pieces, reduce them to their nothingness, and punish them for their sins. May you never see that naked glory. May it never fall on your person. O, sinner, I tell you if it does you will never, never escape from the wrath of God, from a deserved hell. But O, what a change to a sinner who apprehends it, to see that majesty of God in the Man Christ Jesus, and to see the very representation of God's nature in the Man Christ Jesus. Why, it makes God approachable; it makes Him findable; it makes Him bearable even to sinners. Yes, you can bear the sight of the glory of God as it is veiled in the Man Christ Jesus. This is a truth, which, may we receive in the power

of the Holy Ghost, that God is in Christ, and that Christ is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His Person; that all that shall ever be known of God's nature is known in the Man Christ Jesus, shines through Him; that it is that which glads the eyes and warms the heart of a sinner. See if this occupies your thoughts, if you believe in it. Look sinner, if you believe that God has revealed Himself in Christ, if your eyes have ever had that falling on them, that light, that beauty, that love, that justice, that mercy, that holiness of the Almighty God. shining in a bearable glory through the Man, Christ Jesus. Here are first principles; here are everlasting principles. I believe that these truths will glad the hearts of the election of grace in heaven. I believe that this representation of God will fill every sinner who gets to heaven - when he, no longer a sinner, is in heaven - will fill his soul with bliss; God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Is it love you want? then you will see it in, and receive it through, Jesus Christ. "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Is it justice that you would wish to have honoured in your salvation? You will see it here in Christ. "Awake O sword against My shepherd, against the Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord. Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered". Is it holiness that you feel must be honoured in all the approaches that a sinful creature like yourself desires to make unto God? Then you will see in the Lord Jesus Christ, glorified and exalted very high, that very holiness. He is holy; He is holy, and He removes all the sins and pollution of His people and is made unto them sanctification. There is a representation of God made to poor sinners, made to the Church in the very Person of the Lord Jesus. May the Holy Spirit lead us into such a truth as this, for the more we see in the Person of Christ, the more we shall prize that Person. Well may we pray with Hart

O could we but with clearer eyes
His excellencies trace
Could we His Person learn to prize
We more should prize His grace

"This is My beloved Son". I have sent Him to represent Me, and to make known My nature and My perfections. "This is My beloved Son" and in

Him I have put all the fulness that the Church is to be filled with. "This is My beloved Son" who shall magnify My nature, magnify My law, magnify all that I intend to do in and for the church. Look, my brethren, look for a representation of God, and if your souls do pant to know that great God who is eternal in His Being and in all the perfections of His nature, you will see Him one day in Christ, and, so seeing Him, you will love Him. The infinite pleasure of God then in Christ must embrace these points which I have just hinted at. I wish I could express them well. The Lord can express them to you in your hearts; I can only give hints of things. Angels desire to look into the mysteries which I have named. They desire to look into the mystery of Christ and the great mystery of Christ is this, God is in Him. "My Name is in Him" says the Lord to Moses. "My Name is in Him" Hence, we should fear the Name of God in Christ.

In the next place, did not the Father see in His only begotten Son, well beloved Son, with infinite pleasure, the honour of all His perfections. These I would name to you as, first of all, His infinite love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son". He gave Him out of love, took Him from His bosom and gave Him to suffer. He said to Abraham, when tempting him: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest" and offer him up. O, what a touching word: "Thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest" and offer him up. And if it was so solemn, so terrible to Abraham's nature to offer his son, what must it have been to the love of God to give His only begotten Son out of His eternal bosom, but He would not withhold Him, He did not withhold Him, from His church and people. He sent Him out of love and when any sinner gets to know this in the testimony of the eternal Spirit, it makes heaven on earth to that sinner. O, if ever you see, poor sinner, that God so loved you as that He would not let you sink into hell, but that He would give, and did give, out of His bosom His only begotten Son, that He might suffer and die for you, and satisfy for you and bring you to God as a dear child, that will make heaven on earth, make it to you. What, did God so love me, an enemy, a sinner, as that, rather than hell should swallow me up, He would give His only begotten Son for me? Well, this honours the love of God; this honours the love of God, that He gave His only begotten Son. Love that costs nothing - we may speak generally so - is worth nothing. O, what did the love of God to sinners cost Him? What did

the electing love of God cost Him, O sinner, with respect to yourself? Think of it. There was a hell you deserved before the eye of God. There were your mighty sins, a load to crush you into that hell. There was divine justice ready to arrest and punish you. There was omnipotence able to arrest and destroy the body and cast the soul into hell. There was holiness divine forbidding your approach to the majesty of God. And what could save you? A proper, a spiritual apprehension of what we deserve, of how we stand in God's sight as sinners, of what bars there are before and between God and us as we are sinners, will enhance to us the love of the Father in that He would not let all those things continue to stand in the way, but would remove them, and did it at this cost, that His love would give His darling, His only begotten Son out of His bosom. O, what praise this calls for and it gets praise when seen and realised by a poor sinner. Blessed be God that He has glorified His love in such a way as this that He gave His only begotten Son. And then, the great, shining - and to us, if we see it in its nakedness, blinding and killing - perfection of God, namely His justice; His justice. We approve of justice as men; we approve of justice in our own land. We have nothing to say against the justice that takes a man's life away from him who has slain one. A murderer is justly in our law killed. We approve of justice. Do we approve of God's justice? all that perfection in God that says: "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"?. Ah, if we have ever seen that justice in the light of God's teaching, we have approved of it and we, in approving it, have condemned ourselves and justified God. Now what does God see in His Son? He sees the perfection of justice. Satisfied, pleased; all frowns taken from justice's face, so to speak, and a sweet smile on that, justice, saying of a sinner, for whom Jesus gave satisfaction, I am on your side. Sinner, if ever you get this, you will feel a little - and it will be but a little - a little of the pleasure in Christ of which the Father had an infinitude. Infinitely pleased is the Father with His Son as satisfying justice. Christ magnified the law and made it honourable and made it an honour to God the Father to forgive sins; made it a glory in God to pardon a sinner, and so, as that justice stands on the side of the acquitted and says nothing is owing, no debt remains to be paid, no curse remains to be borne, no frown remains to be on a sinner in perdition; all is well. God is pleased with His

dear Son; He satisfied justice. I am pleased with Him too; yes, my soul is pleased with Christ. This great Christ, this humbled Christ, who humbled Himself. This wondrous Christ who stood and took the dying traitor's place and suffered in his stead. This wondrous Christ, who said to justice, when drawing her sword against the sinner, inflict it all on Me. Happy the man to whom this gospel comes. Would you be justified? Now God justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself", and Christ took away that dark, black alienation of our nature from us and reconciled us in the body of His flesh through death to present us spotless and without blame before Him in love. Saints raise your expectations high. Look at the state the dear Son of God brought you into when He took your sins away and opened the door of mercy and opened the way in which, and through which, God could let your astonished eyes look on the things which He hath prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then you will sing: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain". Worthy is Jesus Christ to receive the honour my poor heart can give Him, and I can give Him the same honour that I give to the Father and that I give to the Holy Spirit. Bless God that Jesus Christ did satisfy, most abundantly, the justice of God, that perfection of Deity that makes it impossible for a sinner to be pardoned without blood. "Without shedding of blood is no remission". God will be honoured in heaven by His people, and they shall see every perfection of Deity shining brightly in and through Jesus Christ, and every perfection of Deity thus shining on them, shall fill them with gladness, fill them with satisfaction, fill them with bliss.

I might speak, in the next place, of the holiness of the divine Majesty. Jehovah is holy; holiness becomes His house. Seraphims veil their faces with two of their wings; they cover their feet with two other of their wings; and with the other two, they fly. Holy, holy, holy, is their song, and we sing sometimes of this holiness:

Though we tremble while we sing
We would not wish it less

But where can we sing it? How can we sing of that attribute that, in

itself, looking on us, forbids our approach to the majesty of God? How can we sing of that holiness that says to us, as we are sinners, you must not come near God? Why, when it is seen in Christ. When we see how all the pollution of sin, as well as its guilt, was removed by the death of Christ. He, that devoted Saviour, He left no stain, when He died, on the Church. He left nothing against which infinite holiness could raise an objection; nothing. Jesus is a holy way to the holy God. Jesus is a glorious way to a glorious God. And the Father looked on His Son on Jordan's bank and saw all this perfection which Jesus, when the day of His death should come, should bring in and all bars and lets taken away, heaven opened, and the way to it opened, and the certainty of it made over to the church of the living God, and the Holy Spirit promised, to be a teacher of the church, and lead her into the saving knowledge of the Lord of life and glory. "This is My beloved Son".

And O, what shall we say of mercy? mercy, the total sum of our need. Mercy to melt, mercy to help, mercy to bring near, mercy to comfort, mercy to supply, mercy to bring honourably through their difficulties, mercy which is everlasting. It is all here, dear friends. This blessed Jesus, O that we could honour Him as we honour the Father. It is written in the Psalms: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other". Where did they meet? Where was the meeting place for mercy and truth? Truth inflexible, truth in the sustaining of a broken law, truth in infinite Deity, and mercy suited to sinners. Where is the meeting place? Righteousness and peace. Righteousness that demands perfection in the creature and peace which is not peaceable to the creature as he is a sinful creature - where could they meet? Well, there is only one possible meeting place for these divine perfections and that is in Jesus Christ. There they met, there they embraced and kissed each other, and there they still are assembled to welcome sinners, to help sinners, to bless sinners, to teach sinners, and bring them to glory; they are all there, dear friends. And can we, if we fear God, wonder at this testimony of the Father to His Son?

"In whom I am well pleased". Pleased with what He is, pleased with what He has done, pleased with Him on His throne, pleased with Him in His intercession, pleased with Him in His management of the

world, for now all things are committed unto Him, all earth and all authority and power, and the Father is pleased. Well now, ere I close, I will just put one simple question, and to myself, this namely, looking upon the Man Christ Jesus in our text, who is true Almighty God, can we say that we are pleased with Him? Is there anything in Him that attracts us? We say we are guilty and we are miserable in self and we are poor and we are destitute. We feel lost, and we feel sometimes nearer to hell than to heaven and more like devils than saints. We may see, we may feel, all these things, but come dear friends, come away, so to speak, for a moment from that truth - 'tis painful truth in feeling - but come to this now. Do you feel any attraction to this Man, this God, in One, to the Lord Jesus? Is there to you anything in Him that pleases you? Deity in Him, does that please you? Love, in its perfection, does that please you? Blood to cleanse from sin, does that please you? Righteousness to justify, does that please you? Power to save, power to forgive sin, righteousness to clothe you, bread to nourish you, water to refresh you, oil to anoint you, wisdom to guide you, to bring you through your difficulties and honourably land you in heaven. Is there anything in this Person that gives you pleasure? You may say, I do not know that I am interested in Him. Well, that may be so; still, if you live His life and fear Him, you can say sometimes, I am sure,

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear

And if that be so there may be days of trial and years of suffering before you, but one thing is certain, this, namely, you are going to heaven, for where the heart of a sinner is, there his treasure is, and his treasure is in heaven and that treasure is Christ. Happy, O unspeakably happy, is the sinner who, in humble hope, trembling hope, and love moving, can say: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" Looking through all the angels and all the spirits of just men made perfect, looking through every object that is pleasing in heaven, its street of gold, its glorious and wondrous companions, looking through all these, reaches at last One only One, and says: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee". And then, looking on earth, at wife, and husband, and children, and houses, and possessions and health and comforts, can say: There is none that I desire on earth in comparison of Thee; can

say, sometimes,

I could from all things parted be
But never, never, Lord from Thee

AMEN.