JESUS OF NAZARETH

On this Christmas Sunday it is heartening to know that we are confronted by a Fact. The stories of the birth of Jesus are full of the witchery of romance and poetry. It is about the most beautiful story ever told. But it is more than a story "weaving the silver cord that comes down from the stars of Bethlehem into a golden woof of sunlight and covering up the jagged corners and unsightly places of your life with the myth and color". But if this were only a myth, I, for one, should not be interested in it at all.

"No fable old, nor mystic lore
Nor dream of bards and seers.
No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years."

We are confronted here with the living Fact.

Not only are we confronted with the living fact, but this mighty act of God is the supreme fact of history. So thrilling is it that it has cut history into two. Every event that has taken place in the wide world since man began to keep records is reckoned with regard to his birth. One group took place before he was born. The other took place afterward. Bear in mind, therefore, that we are concerned this morning with a living fact, and that the supreme fact of history.

Now, instead of taking one short text as is my custom, I am taking the four gospels. Why not just one? Because we need more than one view of this many-sided Christ. As we read these gospels, we see that they have much in common, but each one of them saw Jesus through his own eyes and gave the view of him that impressed them most. Let us, then, glance briefly at these four portraits.

I

First, there is the portrait of Matthew, the publican. When Jesus
called Matthew, he forsook all to follow, carrying with him only a pen with which he wrote a gospel. Matthew sees in Jesus the supreme teacher. "He opened his mouth and taught them." We are indebted to Matthew more than to all others for the Sermon on the Mount. He gives special sayings of Jesus, sayings that nobody believed but Jesus, such as "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

He affirmed that Jesus spoke with authority. It was not authority that was derived from the teachings of others. He spoke the truth that he had hammered on the anvil of his own soul. His was the authority of the truth. Since what he said was true, he declared that men and nations should rise or fall, live or die, according to their attitude toward what he said.

Since he spoke with the authority of the truth, he declared further that neither men nor nations could ever run past that truth. He affirmed that what he said was permanent and abiding. We can understand the truth of that declaration better today than those could who first heard him. There is not a word that he spoke that will not stand up. What he said about marriage, what he said about our relation to money, what he said on every matter, abides. Take any utterance of his and put it beside your public buildings, put it beside your majestic mountains, and it will be standing there with the dewiness of the upon it when all these have been dust a million years.

Writing especially for the Jewish people, he wrote to show how this teacher fulfilled the dreams of the ancient prophets. Therefore, he quoted from the Old Testament. Again and again he used the expression "that it might be fulfilled." This teacher, he affirmed to
his people, is the one for whom the ages have waited.

II

Mark was private secretary to Simon Peter. Therefore, his gospel is, in a peculiar sense, Simon's gospel. It is, therefore, the gospel of an eye witness. Mark wrote for the Romans. They did not know the Old Testament scriptures, therefore, Mark does not use them. He gives only one quotation from the Old Testament that he assigns to Isaiah instead of to Malachi, from whom it really comes.

In Matthew, Jesus is the teacher. He is the dreamer of great dreams, and the utterer of great words. In Mark, he declares Mark, shows that he could dream and not make dreams his master; that he could think and not make thought his aim. The Romans were a vigorous and powerful people. They held the nations in their mighty hand. Mark virtually says to them who were interested in power: "You are interested in strong men, you accomplish the impossible. Let me introduce such a man to you." He utters no argument regarding Jesus. He simply undertakes to show Jesus in action.

"Look," he urges, "at Jesus, the mighty doer." Then he proceeds to point to this dramatic personality. He passes from one mighty deed to another with quick strides. One of his key words is "Immediately." It denotes quickness and decisive action. In the course of only sixteen chapters, he used that word almost forty times. "Here", he says, "is a man of power. He has power of decision," He shows him curing a leper. He has power over nature. He can still a tempest. He has power to forgive sins. He has power to set a heart to beating under/frozen ribs of death.
If you admire one who can do things, worthful, things, impossible, then come to Jesus. That is the purport of Mark's gospel, and he makes us aware that this doer of deeds was an exciting personality. "They were amazed," he tells us, "and overcome." He did things that were so thrilling, so amazing, that everywhere we turn the ground fairly trembles under the tread of the multitudes that wait on his doer of mighty deeds, and His ministry. "Meet Jesus," says Mark. "Meet Jesus, the Teacher," says Mark.

III

But we need more than a teacher; we need more than a mighty doer; we need a friend; we need a physician. Hence we need the gospel of Luke. Luke was a Gentile. He is the only Gentile who helped to write the Bible. He was a physician, hence he was interested in folks who were sick in body and mind. He had been a slave, hence he had a peculiar interest in the under dog. He pictures Christ as one who shared that interest. He is the Christ of the bruised and battered folks.

Among the people of Jesus' day there were various groups that were hated. One of them was the publican. These publicans were tax collectors. They were regarded as turn coats and traitors. They were so low that their money would not be accepted by the church. No decent man would associate with them or admit them into his home. It is Luke alone who tells us two charming stories about these publicans.

He tells us about the publican and Pharisee who went up to pray. The Pharisee only swaggered while he congratulated God on having such a wonderful servant. The publican smote upon his breast and begged for mercy. Hence it was he and not the decent Pharisee who went down from the service remade. Luke alone preserves for us that delectable story of the visit of Jesus to the priestly city of Jericho. There is
a touch of humor in the story. There was a large reception given to
meet this fair rabbi. But Jesus turned away from the feast that they
personally
had/printed to go home with a little runt by the name of Zacchaeus.
He called this outcast a son of Abraham, took him to his heart and gave
him back his self respect.

Another despised group were the Samaritans. They were kinsfolk
of the Jews and hated as only poor relations can be hated. But when
Jesus told one of the choicest stories that ever fell from his lips, it was a Samaritan who was the hero and not a Jew. He pictured a man
dying by the roadside. Two pious Jews passed by on the other side. In
the language of Bud Robinson "they had to hurry down to Jericho and read
a paper on how to reach the masses". But it was the Samaritan who at
the risk of his own life saved the life of this unknown man. Luke alone
tells us that.

A third group, held in universal contempt today, were the outcast
women. But we are indebted to Luke for that delectable story that took
place in the house of Simon the Pharisee. This man Simon had invited
Jesus to dinner, possibly I think, to find something to criticize ad-
versely. He did not show him the usual courtesies. By and by a woman
of an evil past came in and anointed the feet of Jesus with tears.
Simon at once reached his conclusion. "This man is not a good
man", he said to himself, "otherwise he would not let this harlot touch
him."

Then Jesus turned to Simon and said, "Simon, do you see this
woman?" Simon did not see her. He was busy looking at the harlot
that was that he could not see the woman that is. "I entered your
home," Jesus said, "and you did not show me the ordinary courtesies, but this woman has given me her best. She has given me her best. Because she has been greatly forgiven, she greatly loves. Therefore her sins which are many are forgiven her." Luke alone tells that story.

Jesus was crucified between two robbers, two criminals. The other evangelists affirm that they/railed upon Jesus along with the mob, but it is Luke alone who tells us that one of them count not go through with it. This man was dying. He knew that Jesus was dying more rapidly than himself. Yet this dying robber turned to the dying Christ and said, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom". And Jesus assured him that the fellowship begun there would last through eternity. "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise."

It is Luke alone that gives us the most beautifully tender and the most tenderly beautiful story that ever fell from lips human or divine - the story of the Prodigal Son. It is all men's story. It tells us how this graceless ladie, who came home having nothing to show for his adventure but rags and shame, was trusted as if he had never gone away and how the very best robe was put upon him. The wise man in Matthew asked for him who was born king of the Jews. Luke has the angel say, "I bring you glad tidings of great joy which will be to all people." Luke shows us Jesus the friend of all men, especially those in desperate need.

IV

John, whose gospel was written last, shows us Jesus as the Divine Saviour, the Son of God. He tells us that the life of Jesus did not begin with his birth, that he had existed from eternity. He tells us that all things were made by him. It was this Jesus who came to the manger, who had dipped his hands into the chalice of eternity and made the oceans
to let the rivers to flow. It was this Jesus, the Word made flesh, whose breath had kindled every sun and lighted each star.

John affirms that Jesus came in love. He came to do something for us that we cannot do for ourselves. He is mighty to save. He alone preserves for us that glittering gem that is the whole gospel in a single sentence, all his mountainous heights in one glorious peak—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Here, then, we are facing a supreme Fact.

1. This Jesus is Jesus of Nazareth. He is a man. He was fond of speaking of himself as the Son of man. In Matthew alone he used the expression twenty-five times. By that he means he is the son of humanity, he is the child of mankind. He is perfectly human. He is the kind of man that all men were meant to be.

He was human in his physical body. As a baby he wore no halo. That was a mark of his incarnation. He was as helpless and ignorant as any baby ever born. He did not as a God play about the streets of Nazareth. His body grew and was subject to pain and to death even as yours and mine.

He was human in his mentality. He had to learn to read. He had to learn the carpentry trade. He "increased in wisdom and in stature." While Jesus was here he did not know everything. He acknowledged this again and again. Of course, his knowledge was self-limited, but his mind was subject to the same laws as yours and mine.

Jesus was human in his spiritual life. He was tempted as we are tempted. To help him withstand temptation and to do the will of God, he was an earnest student of the scriptures. He was a constant attendant at church. Above all else he was a man of prayer. All these things he did
not as an example for us, but because he could not keep his life fit in any other way.

We live in a day when many minimize the deity of Jesus. In our reaction from that we sometimes forget his humanity. Remember that the first heresy that ever vexed the church was a denial not of the divinity of Jesus, but of his humanity. Why do we need to cling so tenaciously to the fact that Jesus was a man? Because if he was not a man, he is not the kind of Saviour that we need. If he is not a man, then he has not gone all the way for our salvation. But since he was a man, he took upon himself the very worst that evil could do to him.

Now, since Jesus was a man, how can we say that he was God come in the flesh? Why did he not always act like a God instead of like a man? Paul gives the answer when he tells us that Jesus emptied himself. Being of infinite power, he limited himself by coming as a man. In his human nature, he showed us all of God that human nature is capable of revealing. He was, therefore, speaking sober truth when he said "he that hath seen hath seen the Father." After nineteen hundred years there are millions who feel that the best they can long for in the eternal God is that he be like Jesus.

Now how shall this become meaningful to us at this Christmas time? You realize that we can give intellectual assent to all this and yet miss Jesus as completely as did the inn keeper who shut the door in the face of the unborn Christ nineteen centuries ago. There is but one way to experience Christ. How did the first followers come to call him Lord? They did not know so call him the first day they met him. It was only as they experienced him that they came to say that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God.
We, too, can come to know him if we experience him. How do we come to know that candy is sweet? Not by looking at or weighing it or touching it. Only by tasting it. How can I tell that a rose is red? Only by looking at it. How can I tell whether Jesus is all he claims to be and can do what he claims to do? Only by giving him a chance. Here is his own word: "If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know."

We must be aware that what we think about any matter is determined more by what we do about it than by anything else. Once our fathers were sure of the rightness of slavery. They reminded themselves how the father of the faithful, Abraham, owned slaves, but they did not convince themselves of the rightness of slavery and then go buy slaves. Having already bought slaves, they then looked about for an argument to bolster up their belief.

Multitudes will celebrate the coming of the Holy Lord this season by getting drunk. I doubt if there was ever a time in American history when so large a portion of our people were seeking for the rightness of liquor as today. What lies back of this. Do we first convince ourselves that liquor is not what the scientists say it is, that it is a poison, that it does not lower our inhibitions, that, on the contrary, it is a fine and pleasant food, and then go out and buy it? No. We drink first, and then argue.

It is the same in the realm of religion. Who are the most doubtful today of the worth of the church and of the reality of Jesus? Not those who have committed themselves but those who act as if the whole Christmas story is a lie. Here, then, is the sole affirmation of Jesus and of the whole Bible, the affirmation both of common sense and
of experience - live today as if Jesus were alive and to you he will be alive. Life as if he were a Fact and to you he will be a Fact.
The age-old miracle will happen again and you will know for yourself, along with Paul, the thrill of this mysterious Christ, in you the hope of glory. If this takes place then you will have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
If...

"Christmas Without Christ."


I want to call your attention this morning to two texts. The first is found in the 2d chapter of Luke and the 7th verse: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." The second is found in Revelations, third chapter and 20th verse: " Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The first of these texts refers to a single event in the history of the human life of our Lord. The second pictures to us the abiding attitude of Jesus Christ through all the centuries.

Let us look at this first text, "There was no room for them at the inn." The sweet angel of suffering has come to the virgin mother and Mary's face is crowned with the divine radiance of motherhood. The little child at her breast is Heaven's King and King of this world, and of all worlds. He has come to live with men. The event is so wonderful that Heaven is bursting with the joy of it. The hills are radiant with a new and wonderful light, and our discordant earth is being serenaded with the music of that land where everybody sings.

But by man Heaven's gift is little regarded, and He who was man's one hope was thrown aside into an old outhouse, for "there was no room for them at the inn."

It is a pathetic story, for mark you, the one guest to whom all doors were shut did not come to steal or to kill or to destroy. He came that we might have life and that we might have it in abundance. He did not come to despoil - He came to enrich. He did not come to darken man's sky but to be the Light of the World. He did not come to intensify man's hunger but to be to him the Bread of Life. He did not come to rob him of his hope but to give him a hope steadfast and sure.

Neither did this wonderful gift come unheralded. Men had been told of His coming. For forty centuries Israel had had her face turned in expectation toward His coming. For long centuries He had been the theme of the prophet's prophecy and the inspiration of the poet's song. Back in the dim distance when sin had blighted man's Eden, it was this promise that followed him like a fair daughter of God without the garden gates: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Abraham had seen his day and rejoiced to see it and was glad. Moses had declared, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up like unto me." Micah had caught the vision of Him and had sung, "Thou Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

And more wonderful still had been the vision of Him that had come to the poet prophet Isaiah. He had seen Him as a child upon His mother's breast and had sung, "Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. The government shall be upon His shoulders. His name shall be called, Wonderful." What a fitting name, - "Wonderful"!
Wonderful in his birth coming into the world as the lowliest of children, "For the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." He was wonderful in His life, "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." He was wonderful in His words, "Never man spake like this man." His syllables healed balsams and cut like two-edged swords. He was wonderful in His deeds. Fevered faces grew cool at His touch. Pale cheeks bore roses and a warm heart heat under the frozen ribs of death. He was wonderful in His death, - "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities." He was wonderful in His triumph over death, for He broke its shackles, strangled it, conquered it and brought light and immortality to life through the Gospel. And He is wonderful in His power to save.

And so Isaiah saw Him as the Wonderful, as the Counsellor, as the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Prince who would bring peace in the heart of the individual. He saw Him as one who would bring peace between man and man and between nation and nation. I know the dream is not yet realized. The good day has not yet come when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together. I do not know when it will come. I do not know how it will come, but in God's own time come it will. For one day God is going to reign in this world from the rivers to the ends of the earth. And Jesus Christ is going to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

"There was no room at the inn," but it was not because the coming of the King had not been foretold. It was not because devout hearts were not looking for Him. It was not because people were not in expectation. It was not because He did not come with infinite power to bless. In spite of all these things, there was no room for Him at the inn.

Since that far off day this child has grown to manhood. He grew up in a peasant's home in a small provincial village. He worked at the humble grade of a carpenter. For three years He preached and at the age of 33 He was foully murdered. But the cross upon which He died has become the center of the world's supreme hope, and every day it continues to draw all men unto Him. And there are millions all round the world today who would die for it.

But though this is true, we need to face this fact this morning as Christian men and women, that there are yet large areas over which Christ is not King. There are still many places where there is still no room for our Lord. In this day of grace two-thirds of the world for which Christ died is still a stranger to Him, and its doors are still shut in His face.

Jesus Christ is still in great measure shut out of our national and international life. I know some progress has been made. Ideals have been discussed and seriously considered in recent days that would have been utterly impossible a few years ago, but those ideals have not been realized. In spite of the Gethsemane through which the world has passed there seems more hate today even than when the great conflagration broke out. Christ is still crowded out of our international relationships.

The door of much of our society life today is shut in the face of our Lord. Society has not grown more Christlike, more wholesome, more chaste in these recent days. In truth it seems to me that there has been a fearful letting down. This is more conspicuous on the part
of women than men.

Take the dance craze for instance. Was it ever more rife and was it ever quite as corrupting? And yet modern society scarcely knows any other way of amusing itself. The only way it knows how to give to charity is to hand over to the poor the money paid for the hugging of the well to do. When we celebrated our victory we knew no other way than to dance over it.

I wonder if you read "The Victory Ball" that appeared in the Saturday Evening Post some weeks ago. It was written by the poet laureate of England. It makes good reading for our modern day.

"The cymbals clash,
And the dancers walk
With their long silk stockings,
And arms of chalk,
And butterfly skirts,
And white breasts bare,
And shades of dead men,
Watching them there.

"Shadows of dead men
Stand by the wall,
Watching the fun of the Victory Ball.
They do not blame them,
For well they know
That if they are forgotten,
Tis better so.

"Under the dancing feet
Are their graves,
Dazzled and motley
In long, bright waves,
Brushed by the palm's frond,
Grapple and whirl
Ox-eyed matron and slim white girl.

"Fat wet bodies go waddling by,
Girt with satin,
Though God knows why,
Gripped of satyrs in white and black
With a fat wet hand
On a fat wet back.

"See, there is one child fresh from the schools
Learning the ropes as the old hands rule.
My, how that dead boy games and grins
As the tom toms bang
And the shimmy begins.

"'What did you think
You should find,,'
Said a shade,
'When the last shot echoed
And peace was made?'
'Christ', said the fleshless jaws of his friend,
'I thought they'd be praying for worlds to mend.'
'Pish', said a statesman, standing near,
‘I’m glad they can busy their thoughts elsewhere.
We must not reproach them,
They are young, you see.’
‘Yes’, said a shade,
And so were we.’

"Victory, victory on with the dance!
Back to the jungle the new beasts prance.
My, how the soldiers gape by the wall,
Watching the fun of the Victory Ball."

Jesus Christ has not yet captured our social life.

There is little room for Jesus at times even in some of our churches. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." When Jesus said that word He was standing at the door of a church. He was standing at the door of the house that was built in His name, but He Himself had been crowded out. I do not know of anything so fearful, I do not know of anything so pathetic as to have a church and no Christ, to have a form of God and no power, to so act as to prevent the Lord having His way in His own house. Oh, let us see to it that He has a place in our own church, the supreme place.

There is no room for Jesus in many of our homes. How many Christless homes there are in America; how many there are in this city. There are almost 300,000 people that are unchurched in Washington. And even of those who are in the church, how many of them live in homes from which Jesus Christ is in large measure crowded out. Remember heart, that what the home is today Jesus Christ has made it. He has a right to first place in it. I heard one say who had spent sometime in modern Russia that they were putting into actual practice there the foul doctrine of the destruction of the home. Women are allowed to keep their own children only so long as those children need them for sustenance. When that day is passed they are given into the keeping of the state. In order to make the stamping out of the home a possibility they are beginning by stamping out Christianity so far as is in their power.

If America is to ever become Christian, if America is to fulfil God’s program for her she must be Christianized. But America can never be Christianized till we have Christian homes. There was a young fellow in Tennessee who married a heartless society woman and took her to the home that his mother had given him. And that society woman could not get along with the old mother and the boy turned his mother out, and she died in the poor house. He was an ingrate, I know, but not so much so as those who shut Jesus Christ out of the home that He Himself has made possible.

After all these years Christ is shut out of many of our hearts. We have never let Him have His way with us. We have looked upon Him at a distance, thought kindly of Him maybe, admired Him no doubt, made good resolutions with regard to Him and yet have never come to the supreme moment where we have enthroned Him. And today at this Christmas time He stands at the door and knocks. May the Lord help us to fling wide the long closed door and let Him in that this Christmas tide may be for us a Christmas indeed.

Why did this inn keeper not give Him welcome? I am going to take the reason here stated as the real reason: There was no room for
Christmas without Christ

Him. Other guests had come. Every room was occupied. Every place was taken. The inn was crowded to capacity and there was no room for Jesus.

And isn't that one of the great dangers of our day? Ours is a busy age. We are rushed and hurried and harassed. We are cumbersed of much serving. Many of us have shut Christ out of our lives not because we hate Him - we are preoccupied, our interest is centered on other things. We have bought a piece of land. We have married a wife. We are fully absorbed in our business, our pastimes, our pleasures. There is no room for Him.

Why did Felix shut Christ out of his life? He was aroused. He was interested. He was even terrified and yet he kept the door closed in the face of the King. The inn of his soul was filled with other guests. Lust and selfishness homed there and there was no room for Christ.

Why did the Rich Young Ruler fail? He was a princely young fellow. He was dissatisfied with the life he had been living. He wanted the life of the ages. He loved goodness. He wanted to love Christ, but there was one thing he wanted more than he wanted Jesus, and that was his money. His life was already occupied.

I said to a friend of mine some years ago who was an engineer and a very wicked man, "Moore, how is it that you get the consent of your mind to pull the throttle day after day and remain Christless?" And he very candidly and honestly said to me, "I won't let myself think about it. If I were to allow myself to think of the tremendous issues involved it would run me crazy."

Not only is over-crowded the secret of the failure of many to become Christians - it is also the secret of many a man's loss of Christ. Now a man does not have to belong to the leisure class in order to become a Christian but a man does have to take some time for the cultivation of his own spiritual life. You remember the story Jesus told of how some seed fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up and choked them. And when He explains it, He said that the cares of this world and the love of money and the lust of other things choked the word. When Demas falls in love with the world he always leaves Paul. Two loves can not home in the same heart at the same time. And you can so crowd life with other interests that the interests of the King are crowded out.

Or it may be that this inn keeper did not think it would pay to entertain Jesus. Remember He came to him as an unborn Christ. Mary and Joseph were obviously poor. There were other guests that he was sure were better able to pay. Therefore he said to these, "There is no room." And he admitted those that he thought it would be profitable to admit.

And there are those today who are shutting Christ out of their lives for this reason. They fancy He comes to rob them of the joy that they have a right to claim. They feel that to admit Him would be to cheat themselves of the delight in life that they have a right to expect. But what a tragic mistake it is.

A little girl was once showing her new handkerchief to a great
Christmas without Christ

artist. He loved the little girl and wanted to do her a favor, and he said, "Let me have your handkerchief and I will paint you a picture upon it." And she snatched it away from him and said, "You shan't spoil my beautiful handkerchief." But had she allowed him to keep it he would have painted her a picture of which a queen would have been proud.

On heart, Christ is not trying to impoverish your life; He is trying to enrich it. You remember Ericson, the builder of the Monitor fancied he had absolutely no ear for music. He was interested in the scientific and that only. He would not go to hear his friend Cley Bull when he played at the opera. So one day the great genius came down to where his friend Ericson was working. He invaded him there. He laid siege to his heart with his magic violin. And as he spilled out Heaven's melodies from those four strings the great scientist listened in tearful astonishment and declared that it was the one thing that he had been wanting all along without knowing what it was. You make room for Jesus and you will find that He is not your foe but your friend, and you will be singing in the joy of a new experience:

"Thou Oh Christ, art all I want, 
More than all in thee I find."

It is altogether possible that this inn keeper failed to receive Jesus because he did not know who he was. He did not have your chance and mine. He lived in the dim twilight of the early dawn. You and I live in the blazing glory of the noon day. He came to him as the unknown and unborn Christ. Today He comes to you and me as the Christ who has lifted empires off their hinges and changed the whole tide of human affairs. We know Him today as the Christ of the New Testament, as the one who healed the sick and cast out demons and raised the dead. We know Him as the Christ of history, as the one whose power has remade the world. He is the one who has given womanhood a chance and who has given childhood a chance. And millions of little eyes will sparkle this day because He has come. We know Him as the Christ who accounts for what was kingly in our fathers and what was most queenly and tender in our mothers. We know him as the Christ by whose power an innumerable company that no man can number have washed their robes and made them white.

Now, this is our big question, What are we going to do with this Christ? What have you done with Him? Have you crowded Him out? Have you thought more of all others at this glad Christmas occasion than you have of Him? It so remember that in loving, patience He is saying at this moment, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Did you notice the word, "I stand and knock"? He does not simply knock once and pass on, but He keeps it up through our careless and indifferent days and weeks and years knocking, always knocking. Sometimes He knocks through our sense of weakness, sometimes through our loneliness, sometimes through our crying needs or through our heartache. He knocks through the call of our responsibilities, responsibilities of our homes, responsibilities of our church. In a thousand tender ways He is knocking at the door of our hearts now and ever more.

And what He says to those who listen is this, "If any man will open", not "if any man will be perfect", not "if any man will be sinless", but "if any man will open the door" - that is all that He asks. Just an opportunity to enter, just room made for Him in our lives. "If any man will open the door I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."
And heart, whatever other gift may have come to you on this Christmas occasion, if this gift has not come you are unspeakably poor. And if this gift has come you are rich and blessed whether anyone else has thought of you or not. What is the secret of Paul's life? He opened the door. And so he exclaimed in the rapture of a new life, "Christ liveth in me. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

And this heavenly guest is waiting to possess your life and mine. Open the door and He will enter. Give Him your life and He will take it and He will break down every idol and cast out every foe and fill it with His own presence, and Paul's wonderful prayer will be realized by you that "Christ may dwell in your heart by faith." (The garden of the nightingales.)
CHRISTMAS WITHOUT CHRIST

Luke 2:7 - "There was no room for them at the inn."

The sweet Angel of suffering has come to Mary and her brow is crowned with the radiance of motherhood. On her breast is a little Child. The coming of that Child is the greatest event of all human history. All Heaven is bursting with the glory of it. A choir from the land where everybody sings is serenading our world with celestial music. An angel messenger is proclaiming to the shepherds good news for all men. But this innkeeper passes on his heedless way as if nothing out of the ordinary had taken place.

This is a tragedy too deep for tears. Christmas has come but it is not Christmas for him, because there is no Christ. It is no Christmas for him because there is no Christmas joy, no Christmas peace, no Christmas love. Surely he was right who said, "I do not wonder at what people suffer. I do wonder at what they miss." Here was a man who might have had Christ as his guest. His home might have been immortalized by the greatest event of all time. But for some reason, he managed to fail to realize his possibilities. He had no room for Christ.

His tragic failure was repeated by his whole nation. About the saddest sentence in literature is that in the gospel of John, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." This was the case, in spite of the fact that the hope of His coming had been the dearest dream of the choicest souls of His race for long years. This was the
case in spite of the fact that for centuries this event had been the theme of the prophet's prophecy and the inspiration of the poet's song. Yet, when it took place, they could find no better use for the gift than to fling it away in an old outhouse at its birth and to hang Him on a cross at the close of the day.

Many years have gone by since that far-off night. During these years, that baby has grown to manhood. He has brought a message of life and light to all mankind. He has taught, as never man taught. He has lifted empires off their hinges and changed the whole current of human history. He accounts for all that is beautiful and best and many that are dearest to us. He put His touch on the rugged strength of our fathers. He transfigured the beauty of our mothers. Yet this tragedy is still a present tragedy with ourselves. In wide areas of our lives, there is still no room for Christ.

I.

There is little room for Jesus in our national life. We call ourselves a Christian nation, but how far this is from being a reality. Certainly, we have men in public life who are men of character, men of vital religion, but we also have very many who are not. We have men who are politicians, men whose one thought is how they can stay in office, men of itching palms, men who are ready to sell their very souls for place and power. There is entirely too little room for Christ in our national life.
And how tragically he is shut out of our international relationships. We are engaged in a war that has been forced upon us. But back of this calamity that threatens to destroy salvation, there is a long history of selfishness and sin and greed on the part of the nations. We have somehow cherished the misguided conviction that we could be Christians individually and yet act with gangster-like selfishness in our international relationships. It is this shutting out of God that accounts for the tragedy that engulfs our world today.

At this Christmastide, our Lord will find scant place in some of our homes. We will prepare a lovely feast but we will shut the door in the face of the Quest of Honor. He will be shut out of many of our hearts. In these days when we need him so desperately, in these days when it is so vastly important that we have something of real spiritual wealth to share with our fellows, our own hearts and lives may be empty of Christ, but if we miss Him, it will not be because we must. Everyone of us may have Him. He might have been the guest of this ancient innkeeper if he had only been willing to have received Him.

II.

Why, I wonder, did this inn-keeper miss Him?

First, I am going to take his real reason as the one that is here suggested: there was no room in the inn. This man was running a little hotel. When Joseph and Mary came, his rooms were all occupied. He heard their appeal and shook his head and said, "No room." Thus, Christ was crowded out. This does not mean that the guests that this innkeeper was entertaining were vicious. There is no hint that they
were not sober and upright people, but in filling his inn with the second best, he lost the best.

That is the greatest danger that threatens many of us. I am not afraid that you will ever become crooks or thugs, but there is a danger for all of us that we will become so absorbed in the secondary that we will lose the primary. In Bunyan's immortal allegories, there is the story of the man with the muckrake. This man is out in the barnyard very busily raking up dirt and sticks and straw. He hasn't a moment to lose, but all the while, just above his head is a mighty angel on outstretched wings. This angel is holding a golden crown in his hand, waiting to crown the man if he will only look up. But he is defeated of his purpose because the muckraker is too busy at his second-rate task.

There is a story of a lad who was walking to the village one day with his eyes fixed upon the path in front of him. By and by, he saw something that had a bit of a gleam. He picked it up and dusted it off and said, "It is a coin." It so thrilled him that ever after that he kept his eyes fixed on the ground. The blue of the sky, the splendors of the sunset, the bloom of flowers, he missed altogether. By and by, when he reached the end of his journey, all that life had meant to him was the picking up of a few dirty, dusty pennies in a dirty, dusty road.

This is the danger that threatens not only the man who makes no pretenses to religion. It threatens the professing Christian as well. When Jesus told the story of the soil, he said that some seed fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up and choked them. That is, we suffer
the secondary to crowd out the primary. We get so busy with the things that matter little that we lose the things that matter much. I have known fathers to get so busy making a living that they had no time for their own children. I used to have a neighbor, the mother of a large family, but she was so busy lecturing here and there that she left her own children to the nurture of the street. Even we preachers have a tendency to wear ourselves down doing trivial things that matter but little.

Here is a description of a character we have all known. I will not say that this poem is from Shakespeare, but it comes from one who has some understanding of the hectic day in which we live.

On Monday, she lunched with the housing committee,
With statistics and stew she was filled
Then she dashed to a tea on the crime in our city
And dined with the church ladies' guild.

On Tuesday, she went to a baby week lunch.
And a tea on good citizenship.
At dinner, she spoke to the trade union bunch
There wasn't a date she could skip.

On Wednesday, she managed two regular dinners,
One at noon and another at night.
On Thursday, a luncheon for boot-licking sinners,
And a dinner on war. Is it right?
"World Problems We Face" was her Friday noon date, And a luncheon address, you have guessed. Then she wielded her fork, while a man from New York Spoke at dinner on social unrest. On Saturday noon, she fell in a swoon, Missed a speech on "The Youth of Our Land". Poor thing, she was through, for she never came to, But she died with a spoon in her hand.

III.

Then, this inn-keeper might have shut the door in the face of Jesus because he really did not care to have Him as a guest. After all, that is ever the real reason that we miss Him. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." All of us are about as Christ-like as we really desire to be. If you fail to have Jesus as your guest this Christmas season, you may have many excuses, but there will only be one reason: you do not want Him. Wherever there is an eager heart, wherever there is a welcome, there Jesus always comes. In fact, He so longs to come that He is constantly knocking at the door of our hearts. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear My voice and will open the door, I will come into him and suffer with him and he with Me." Everybody has Christ who really wants Him.

By this, I do not mean, of course, that we would not all be glad to be Christians if we could be so on our own terms. There is
something so beautiful about Jesus that we should all like to have Him as our friend and our companion, provided we could do so without it costing us anything. But that cannot be. When I was pastor in Memphis, a man parked a sport model Cadillac in front of my parsonage and rushed in with a face gleeful with good news. "You see that car," he said to me, "that is the car that you ought to drive. You belong in the Cadillac class." That was a good touch in itself. He was about the only man in Memphis that knew that I belonged to the Cadillac class. "Knowing that you are in that class," he continued, "we want you to drive one of our cars. We would feel honored to have you drive it. So much is this the case that I am going to make you that car for $4,000."

What a bargain! It fairly made me gasp. But you know what I told him? I said, "I don't want the car." What did I mean? That his car was of no value? Did I mean that it would not run? By no means. If he had been willing to give me the car and to have endowed it, I should certainly have been glad to have had it. But what I meant was that price and up-keep taken into consideration, I did not want it. Almost everyone of us would like to be Christians but for this fact that standing at the door of entrance is this word, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." We do not desire Him enough to be willing to give ourselves.

Here is a striking story. Felix is living with a beautiful woman who is not his wife. He has prestige and power. He has given reign to every low passion, yet time hangs a bit heavily on his hands. He is in need of a new thrill. He remembers a certain queer prisoner that is in one of the cells beneath the palace. He decides that he will send for
him and amuse himself with him for an idle hour.

And when this prisoner, whose name was Paul, is brought in, he reasons of righteousness, temperance, and of judgment to come. The bored expression passes from the face of Felix. He becomes intensely interested, then he becomes terrified. Then big beads of perspiration break out on his face. He clenches his hands in agony. At last, he can stand it no longer. "It is enough, Paul," he says, "I know what you say is true, but go thy way for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Why, when this man might have been free did he remain a slave? Why, when he might have been a saint, did he remain the poor sinner that he was? It is not because the gospel made no appeal to him. It did. It made a tremendous appeal. He shut the door in the face of Christ and clung to his own ruin because he was not willing to pay the price. To become a Christian meant to give up the woman at his side and he wasn't willing to make the surrender.

That is, in reality, the case with all of us. Don't be shocked. I am not saying that your sin is the sin of Felix, but it will prove just as deadly if it keeps Christ out of your life. Here is another man who is as far above Felix morally as Pike's Peak is above a molehill. We call him a rich, young ruler. One day in all eagerness and enthusiasm, he ran down the road to fall at the feet of Jesus with this big question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus gave him the answer, "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasures in Heaven." But Christ was too much for him, and we read of him, this tragic sentence, "He went away." Anybody can have Christ as his guest who really wants Him, but you must want Him enough to pay the price.
IV.

So this inn-keeper missed Him, partly from chance, because he was preoccupied, mainly because he did not want Him. Missing Jesus, he missed life. Missing Him, he missed the companionship of the only One Who is able to satisfy the deep hungers and thirsts of these human hearts. Failing to receive, he stood in the presence of a needy world with nothing to give.

Is that your case? What have you tonight that is worth living for and worth dying for? What have you to share with those closest to you? What have you to share with a world gone wrong? Christmas is a time of good will. It is a time when we think not so much of the blessing of receiving as the greater blessing of giving. But some of us have nothing to give because we have not, in the deepest reality, received.

I shall never forget the first Christmas tree that I ever attended. I was quite a small boy. The Christmas tree was in our little village church at Flatwoods. I am quite sure it was a small and commonplace affair, but to me it looked like a giant of the forest that was decked with the very splendors of Heaven. Santa Claus was there. It was the first time I had ever seen him. We children clustered about him and he took present after present from the tree, calling our names and filling our eager hands.

But there was one boy who turned a wistful face to the tree and for a long time received nothing. He was the village half-wit, but though he was quite stupid, his face was full of yearning. Then Santa Claus clipped from the tree the largest package that was on it and
called his name. His dull face became almost radiant. His lack-luster eyes sparkled for an instant. He took the box with hands that shook with excitement. He untied the knot that bound it, with trembling fingers.

He lifted the lid and then stolid gloom settled over his face again, for the box was empty. Somebody, mistaking a tragedy for a joke, had put an empty box on the tree.

We are hanging presents on the world's great Christmas tree, each of us, and the presents we hang are the lives we live. Some of us are hanging empty boxes, empty of kindness, empty of love, empty of Christ. But it is the privilege of all of us to hang boxes that are so full that we can give, in some measure, as God gives. This is our promise: "If any man thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, out of his inner life shall flow rivers of living water." May God grant that this may be true of every one of us.

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1. He was too cowardly
   1. From 7 years old to 12
   2. Tragic closure of their life

2. He was too costly
   1. Jesus has not come to deserve
   2. He does demand our love
   3. "Flee, 1-Ruler"

3. He was not expecting them
   1. Secretly much joy and peace grew
   2. We no longer expect as they did, but this does not mean that we are to expect nothing
CHRISTMAS WITHOUT CHRIST

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:7

I.

The text embodies one of the supreme tragedies of our race. The angel of suffering has come to Mary. Her brow is crowned with the sweet radiance of motherhood. Upon her breast lies a little child. That is the one hope of a woman. But this inn keeper has no place for him. This child does not fit into his scheme of things. He has no hospitality for the highest. Therefore, he must find something better to do with this child of hope than to fling him aside into an old out house. This, he did because there was no room in the inn.

Now, the treatment that Jesus received at his birth was a prophecy of what was to happen in the after days. When John wrote of him, he used one of the saddest sentences ever uttered. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." The Jewish people were in expectation of the coming king. But when he came he did not fit into their scheme of things. He refused to share their prejudice. He refused to entertain their hate. He refused to minister to their national pride. Therefore they had no place for him. They knew nothing better to do with him than to hang him on a cross.

Since that far off day, he has lifted empires off their hinges and changed the whole current of history. He has brought to the world a new and deathless hope. He has breathed upon all the centuries like a life giving gulf stream. Millions have given hospitality to him. Some of us are glad to count ourselves among that number. To multitudes at this moment, he is the fairest of
ten thousand and the one all together lovely.

But, in spite of this beautiful truth, the picture is not all together beautiful. There are still vast numbers of people that give Christ no welcome. We know no better way of treating him than would this inn keeper of the long ago. We have little more hospitality for him than did his own nation.

"When Jesus came to Golgotha

They nailed him to a tree.
They drove spikes through hands and feet
And made a calvary,
They crowned him with a crown of thorns
Red were his wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days
And human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to our town,
We merely passed him by
We did not hurt a hair of Him
We only let him die.
For the heart had grown more tender
And we did not cause him pain,
We only just passed down the street
And left him in the rain.

Today this Christ is largely crowded out of our international relationship. He came to bring peace and good will to the nations of the world. But as nations, we still worship the God of force. We still believe that hate is stronger than love. We still pin our faith to force. Forgetting what Jesus said and what history has demonstrated over and over again. That is this: He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword. The better armed we are as individuals, the more dangerous we are. The same is true of nations. Shut our eyes to it how we may, the one hope for our bleeding world is to saturate our international relationship
"Christmas without Christ"

with the song of "Peace and Good-will" that the angels sang above the starlit heights of Bethlehem.

Jesus still has too small a place in our economic and industrial relationship. Capitol and Labor still seem to trust in selfishness more than unselfishness. They seem to believe that they can win through ill-will. I do not know what the final solution of our perplexing problem will be. But, of this I am sure they will never be permanently solved until they are solved in the spirit of Christ. Aggressive and sacrificial good will would do more to heal our industrial woes if intelligently applied than all else in the world. We must make room for Christ in our economic and industrial life.

There is still too little room for him in our homes. This present generation has made tremendous inroad upon the home. The home in which I grew up was separated from the ordinary home today by distance wide enough to be represented by centuries. We lived largely upon what we produced upon the farm. Parents and children worked at a common task. They came together at the close of the day for fellowship, but always ended with family prayer. Today changed economic conditions make such wholesome homes all-but impossible. Our homes are in a state of transition, but there is one factor that may remain unchanged—we need as desperately the presence of Christ in our home life as ever. How many can say with Martha "Lord if thou had'st been here sooner, my brother might not have died." If the American home is to be saved from its disintegration it must have the help of religion.

Jesus is still set out of many of our lives. In many of our hearts there is still little or no room for him. This Christ came to this ancient inn keeper as a gift. So he comes to you and me. But all we need to do to miss it is to refuse to receive him. Neither God nor man can give us what we refuse to take. It may be our supreme joy at this Christmas season to have him as our guest. He is for every man who will accept him. "As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God."
Why did not this inn keeper receive Jesus?

1. I am going to take the reason here given as the real reason. There was no room. When Joseph and Mary came the inn was really crowded with guests. Therefore, there was nothing to do but to turn them away. So it is with many still. We often shut Jesus out because we are pre-occupied. This is what he had in mind when he told the story of a certain royal wedding feast. The king's son was to be married. A great dinner was prepared in his honor. But when the dinner was announced many refused to come.

Why did they refuse? It was not because they had any special prejudice against the king. They were just pre-occupied. Their minds and hands were full of other matters. "I can't come", said one, "because I have just bought a piece of land." Therefore he was not interested in the feast, just then he was interested in his land. Another had just bought five yoke of oxen. Therefore these were filling his horizon just then. Another had just married. Marriage is a right and beautiful relationship, but it was so absorbing just then as to rob this invited guest of the feast.

There are many missing the highest today in art, in literature, in nature, in home life, in religion because they are too busy. They are so absorbed in the secondary that they often miss the primary. Wordsworth lived in a day that was far more sensible than ours. Yet, he felt the complexity of life robbing many of life's finest values. Many were so hurried and crowded that they did not have time to give hospitality to the best.

The world is too much with us late and soon
Getting is spending we lay waste our powers
Little service in nature that is ours
This sea that bears it a bosom to the moon
The winds they will be whispering all hours,
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers
"Christmas without Christ"

For these, for everything we are out of tune
They move us not.
Great God I would rather be a pagan cradle
in a creed out worn
That so might I standing on this pleasant lea
Have glimpses that would leave me less forlorn
Have sight Photious rising from the sea,
Or hear old Tritan blow his horn.

Jesus told the story of a sower who went forth to sow. Some of the seed fell among thorns. When the wheat sprang up, it was choked. That is, it was crowded out by something other than itself. A thorn is not necessarily a bad something. It is anything that chokes the wheat. What I fear for you is not so much that you will crowd Christ out by giving hospitality to the worst. Your danger and mine is rather in this, that we should crowd him out by giving hospitality to the second best. Martha was a good woman. But when Jesus visited her one day, she got so busy with pots and pans that she had no place for him. If that danger threatened long ago, it threatens far more today.

On Monday she lunched with the housing committee,
With salads and stew she was filled.
Then she dashed to a tea on the crimes in our city
And dined with the church ladies guild.

On Tuesday she went to a babies week luncheon
And to a tea on good citizenship.
At dinner she spoke to the trade union bunch
There was not a date she could skip.

On Wednesday she managed two regular dinners,
One at noon and the other at night.
"Christmas without Christ"

On Thursday a luncheon on boot-leggin' sinners,
And a dinner on war-"Is it right?"

World problems we face was her Friday noon date
And a luncheon address you have guessed.
Then she wielded a fork while a man from New York
Spoke at dinner on social unrest.

On Saturday noon she fell in a swoon
Missed a speech on the Youth of our Land.
Poor thing she was through, for she never came to,
But she died with a spoon in her hand.

How busy we are, so many social engagements, so many business engagements.
So much letting of empty things take up our time. Bunyan gives a picture of
much that is in our life. He shows us a man out in the barn yard. He is terribly
busy. There is a rake in his hand and with muscles astrut he is raking up sticks
and straw. Just above him on outstretched wings is an angel. This angel has a
crown in his hand. He is longing to crown this busy man, but he cannot get his
attention. He has no room for such things as angels and crowns. He is too busy
raking up dirt, sticks, and straw. What is the tragedy of flinging wide the door of
hearts to the . This above all, that it compels us to shut out the primary.
Many will miss Christ at this Christmas time simply because there is no room.

2. Then it is all together possible that this inn keeper miss Jesus
through ignorance. We miss many of life's finest prizes because we do not recognize
they are in reach of our hands. It is said that a certain vendor of cheap jewelry
used to push his cart about some of the main streets of Paris. Among the poulty
gewgaws that he had to sell was a stone marked rock crystal, 24 francs. A man
came along one day with an eye for real values. He bought this cheap crystal.
Today, I am told that it is among the crowned jewels of the British Empire. Jesus
came to this inn as an unborn Christ. Perchance he missed him through ignorance.

But that need not be the case with us. He comes to us as the historic Jesus. He brings his credentials in his hand. He has ushered in a new day. He has made and is in process of making a new world. He accounts for the best that is in the lives of the nation. He accounts for the best in the lives of the individual. I have seen his finger marks on the rugged face of my father. I have seen them in the beautiful life of my mother. He comes to me as the known Christ. If I reject Him, I am without excuse.

Of course, there are times, even still when he comes to us in disguises that we fail to recognize Him. Maybe he comes as a little child in need of help. "Whosoever receives one such child in my name," he said, " Receives me." He comes in calls to do the daring thing. The unselfish thing. That old story of the veteran who gave his cloak to a shivering soldier boy is to the point. As he was sinking into what he thought was his last sleep. He saw one putting on the coat that he had given away. That one spelling ragged, shivering soldier. It was the Christ of God and this Christ looked at him with a smile and said "In as much as you did it unto the least of these, you did it unto me." In some up set and disagreeable cause that comes to you during these days, you might come face to face with Jesus, be sure that you do not miss him through ignorance.

3. Then this inn keeper might have missed Jesus because he did not wish to have him as his guest. Jesus is up setting personalities. He turned the little world of his day up side down. He is doing so still. If this inn keeper received him, there were certain other guests that would have to be turned away. Not wanting to pay this price he turned Jesus away.

This is a constantly recurring tragedy. There are new duties today that have no room for Jesus because his presence is an embarrassment. He is too demanding and too exacting. He will not be room mate with selfishness and littleness, meanness and prejudice. He will not be room mate with any form of sin. Pilate admired him. But, he felt that if he took him into his heart he must turn Caesar out and he could not shut the door on Caesar.
What is there in your life this morning that means more to you than Jesus? You are soon to pass through Christmas. Will it be a Christmas without Christ? Will you have the corps with all the life gone away? When Felix listened to Paul he was greatly stirred, he would liked to have become a Christian. He trembled over the spell of Paul's appeal, but the woman at his side did not tremble and Felix said "If I let Christ in, I must let her out" he said "go they way for this time."

There is a story of a certain French noblemen who sat one night in one of the parks of Paris listening to the nightingale. As he listened, he thought of his own spacious parks in the South of France where he had never heard the song of a singing nightingale. The reason came to him as he listened to these feathered poets. There were too many birds of prey in his parks. So when he went home he employed hunters to destroy them. Then one night he heard the song of a lone nightingale. The next night there were others. Now his parks are known as the parks of the nightingale. But before he had the music, he had to be willing to let the birds of prey go. So it is with us.

III.

Why should we have Christmas without Christ?

It is not necessary that we drag Jesus into a life a sheer force. He is more eager to enter than we are to receive him."Behold I stand at the door and knock," but if we give him a chance, as readily as the sunlight comes through our windows as we lift the blinds, so ready he will come in and make Christmas for us. He only waits for an opportunity and that opportunity can be given by none but ourselves.

Not only may we have a Christmas with Christ, but what is possible for one day is possible for all the days. We are to live in the spirit of Christmas. What is that spirit? That is the spirit of good will. Good will is the mightiest power in all the world. It changes the personalities of others. It sends you out to bleed in another's wounds, to weep in another's tears, to laugh in another's joy. It gives
you the privilege of doing the year round what Jesus was constantly doing.

The giving of self in the service of others.