

Christ Willingly Received into the Ship

By Paris Reidhead*

Perhaps you would like to turn to John, Chapter 6. Our message from God's Word will be found in this portion. The Theme is this, Christ Willingly Received into the Ship. The Text is the 21st verse:

"Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

"The eyes that have seen Jesus," said St. Augustine, "find all objects but Jesus unworthy of their regard." This ought to be true in our lives. However, frequently our Lord gives clear evidence that He knows that inner magnetism that draws our eyes away from Him to lesser things. And thus we expect to find Him understanding of our natures and patient with us. We know that He loved us when we were utterly unworthy, when there was nothing to commend us to Him. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that He does tenderly and graciously bear with us until He sees that heart of stubbornness and rebellion that refuses to walk in His way. But the text that we have read gives clear evidence of the understanding patience of the Lord with each of us.

We see first our Lord's concern for the multitudes; for a great company of people have followed Him into the mountains He has viewed them, not as a throng, not as a mass, but as men and women, boys and girls. He sees, always saw, the whole person. And it behooves us to understand that our Lord's ministry was never "to the soul" as some excrescence of personality apart from the person. He loved men, and He loved women; and He gave Himself for the whole person. And it behooves us to understand that this is what He expects of us in our evangelism as well. And our Lord's concern for the multitude was a personal concern for the individuals that made up the throng. He saw their need for truth, and their hunger for truth. They had gone to teachers that had been endorsed by their fathers as being the custodians of truth. They had attended the synagogue school. They had listened to the exposition of the Rabbis. They were acquainted with the traditions and the teachings of Israel. However, you see the pure word of God had to some degree been made of none-effect. Our Lord said this. He said that traditions, the teachings of the elders, have robbed the Word of its significance, of its meaning, and of its point and of its purpose; and therefore our Lord brought them back not only to the Torah, but beyond the Torah to His own heart. For Moses spoke as he was moved by the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit. And thus our Lord could carry them, as He did in the Sermon on the Mount, right passed the interpretation given by the fathers to that which was in His heart when He spoke through Moses.

He recognized their need for truth, and their desire for truth, and their willingness to sit and listen when truth was proclaimed. The common people heard Him gladly. They were prepared to recognize that He spoke as no other man ever spoke. They sat at His feet, and He always spoke to them. Isn't it strange, even wonderful, that one of the most profound utterances of our Lord should have been given to that woman of questionable virtue at the well when He said, "God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth" (Joh. 4:24). Where else was such truth uttered by our Lord. Nothing higher than this. And He saw their need for truth and capacity for truth, and willingness to receive it; and so He taught them, gladly, even as they heard Him gladly. But He also saw the need of the people for health. And so when they came with their sickness, He wasn't interested only in their spirits, their souls, but He knew that when the body raged with fever, the mind was incapable of contemplating eternal truth. And so He addressed Himself to their physical need. When the body was wracked and twisted, as He said, Satan having bound the daughter of Abraham for these 18 years, He loosed her; for He knew that He had to loose her body, if He were to loose her mind and loose her spirit as well. He was concerned about the whole person, about their minds, and about truth, about their spirits and their response to truth, and about their bodies. But He also knew that they had continuing needs. And so when He spoke to the rich young ruler and challenged him to give all that he possessed to the poor, He didn't send him out on the street to beg. He said, "Come follow Me" (Luk. 18:22). Our Lord had a plan. And our Lord has a will, a plan, for every child of His. He is concerned about your living. He is concerned about money to meet your needs. He is concerned about your protection and your preservation and your survival. You can bring the most humble request to Him, and He understands. He knew what it was to have a villager come into Joseph's carpenter shop and say, The yoke on my oxen is broken and I need a yoke. And it was our Lord's task as a carpenter to take a piece of wood, free from knots and that which would have galled, and made sore the shoulder of the oxen, and so to plane it and so to shape it, and so to smooth it that when it would fit the oxen He recognized the need of the ox. He recognized the need of the farmer, and the need of the family.

Would anyone that had addressed Himself to such concerns ever be unconcerned about the need of any. Not so. Our Lord knew their need, and as they had come to listen to Him as He spoke truth He healed them that were sick in body, and when they were hungry He was concerned. And in His concern, He said to Philip, "What are you going to do? The responsibility is yours. Feed them" (Joh. 6:5). And you recall the response. "As Philip looked and saw the throng and said (he had a vast sum of money in mind for Philip when he said) 200 penny worth won't even give them a crumb" (Joh. 6:6-7). Our Lord was concerned for them, and He knew that His disciples ought to be concerned, and the very throng, the press of the mass, the multitude ought not to have dimmed their concern, for it had not changed His. And thus it behooves us to recognize that as we as a church serve the Lord here in the midst of a multitude of people, a world,...

Everywhere I go, I tell my friends that New York can never again be viewed as an Anglo Saxon community, a Protestant community, to be served as it had been served a hundred years ago. New York has become a world city, and as a world city a world mission field. And the throng must not overwhelm us, and the multitude must not discourage us, because when He put Philip into the midst of the people's need, He provided Philip with everything in Him necessary to meet the need. But He asks of us that we recognize His concern for the multitude that have not bread. And so our Lord showed His concern for the multitude. It has not changed at all. He said, "Go ye, therefore, and teach the Gospel to every creature" (Mar. 16:15). He didn't say, Preach it to the world. Yes he did, the world, but it was every creature. He is concerned about that man, that woman, that boy, that girl, that breathes the breath of human life, and has fears and hopes and aspirations and longings. And our Lord is sensitive to them, and sympathetic to them, concerned about them. But our Lord's method was His people. Our Lord's means was His disciples. And so we find that His concern is not only for the multitude, but His concern is for these whom He has called to share with Him in the task. And we see His concern for His disciples. He knew their needs. He had gone into the mountain, expressly that they might have a little protection from the throng, that they might have rest.

I frequently think that the Lord was not nearly as responsible for many of the schedules that we erect as we are for them ourselves. I am sure that your schedule with all of the intense occupation that it demands of you may have to be reconsidered in the light of His will. Our Lord certainly was concerned that His people had rest. He said, Come apart and rest awhile. And in His inimitable way, Vance Havner, seeing the frenetic Christians that are everywhere, said, "The Lord was concerned that His people rest. If we do not come apart," said Mr. Havner, "we are going to come apart." On every hand we see people that are coming apart because they have not recognized that the Lord was concerned for a proper place for rest. He knew they needed fellowship with Him and with each other. And so He had taken them to this mountain top. He had taken them to this place that there they could encourage one another and strengthen one another, share their needs and their burdens, share their victories and triumphs, and find that He was the author of all, both the burden and the victory.

They needed teaching. They needed truth to be quickened again to their hearts. And so He had taken them into the mountain, there that He might teach them instruct them, and nourish them in things eternal. And the Lord will ever do that for you, His servants. And remember, you are His disciple, and when He shows concern for His disciple it is for everyone that names His Name. He wants you to learn to rest in Him, and to learn that the victory is not in your doing for Him, but His doing through you. And He wants you to have fellowship, far more fellowship with each other than you have known in the past. I believe that the degree of spiritual progress might be related to your spiritual fellowship.

But then there was something else our Lord was concerned about. He was concerned that His disciples should discover their own impotence. He wanted them to see how little they had. And so He called Philip and said, Philip, you are here as one of Mine. Will you please undertake the responsibility of feeding the throng. And you see Philip was still thinking in terms of what he brought to Christ, that Christ was going to be limited to what he brought to Him. And so he remembered what was in the bag that Judas carried, and some personal funds that he might have been given, or he held. And he figured that if he gleaned every penny that these eleven or twelve had that it would not be more than 200 penny worth. And so he measured it in terms of their willingness to sacrifice what they had to meet the need. And our Lord wanted him to see right then that the task was not to be measured in terms of what they brought to Christ, but in terms of what Christ was bringing to them. And so He wanted them to see their impotence. And Andrew came, a more practical man, for there was not any place even to buy the 200 penny worth of bread. There wasn't a bakery out there, and so we find a miracle. Do you know what the miracle is? The miracle is that a little boy waits till late in the afternoon before he opens his lunch.

Have you? Most of you, some of you have never been little boys. But some of us that have are aware of the fact that when little boys start out in the morning on the hike to take a lunch, mother had better pack two, because they are going to be three whole blocks away from home and they are going to say, "I'm hungry." And so in the next three blocks they are going to nibble on the sandwiches and eat the fruit, and by the time 11 o'clock is come everything they had is gone. Well, here is a little lad that is come this distance and gone through the noon hour, and to the afternoon, and he hasn't opened the package that mother gave him when he started out. Now this to my mind is a miracle, testifying to the utter engagement with Christ that this little lad demonstrated. The Lord had so completely occupied him that he lost all concern for his stomach. This was an unusual thing, and the important thing was that Andrew knew about it. Now I don't know how Andrew knew about it, whether he had spies out in the group, or whether the little boys had heard of the dilemma. It does not tell us. But we do know that the word finally got to Andrew who brought it to the Lord. Isn't this just like us? We are going to find the answer in what we have. We are going to measure it by what we bring, and if 200 penny worth won't do it then here is five loaves, and a few fishes.

Now I've never known whether this was an evidence of unbelief or of faith. But at least I know that Andrew came and said, "Lord, this is all we have. How are we going to feed them?" (Joh. 6:8-9) You see, our Lord Jesus wanted His disciples to know that that He was the answer to every opportunity. My dear friend, do we today realize how signally we are failing the Lord Jesus in so many areas of responsibility. It is because we have been working with the 200 penny worth. It is because we have been trying to distribute the five loaves and the few fishes. And it isn't going to work. Our Lord wanted us through this to understand that we measure our responsibilities not by what we have in our hands to be used by Him, but by what He has in His hands to be used by us. And we are so reluctant to do it. He wanted His disciples to discover that whenever He is placed into the midst of any situation and the government is laid upon His shoulder, He is sufficient.

I have a little booklet to which I have made reference, and if any of you need it or want it I will be so happy to share it with you. But dear E. Gladys Dieterle this lovely fragrant Christian whom I see alongside of Miss Frances who was here last Sunday night, these two, one from Japan, one from China, are among the most gracious, godly, of the flowers of faithful womanhood and missionaries that I have ever known. E. Gladys Dieterle wrote years ago this little booklet, "Christ in the Midst," and set forth that truth that continues to be like myrrh and the aloes and the cassia out of the Ivory Palaces to my heart. I read it again, and again, and again, this lovely picture of our Lord in the midst of the situation with the government upon His shoulder. And whenever this happens, then He can act according to His Name.

Remember what Isaiah said? "Unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). And whenever we put the government on His shoulder, admitting our helplessness, recognizing our weakness, our impotence, then He can be according to His Name. And then we find that He is mighty in the midst of His people. And here when they have a responsibility to feed a throng of hungry people, they have nothing but a little bread, just a boy's lunch. They bring it to the Lord and say, Lord, we are helpless. We are utterly impotent. We can't meet the need. Then He says, I want you to see that the need is not met by what you bring to Me, but by what I bring to you. And if you'll just allow Me to be to you what I want to be, see what will happen. And so we find that as they present Him the lunch, the little boy gives it gladly to Him, He begins to bless it and break it. The people, the men sit down in companies of fifty. Elsewhere we are told, 5 thousand men that are there to receive the food on behalf of themselves and their families. And the company may then, if you figure three to one, have been probably 20 thousand or 15 thousand. But at any rate a vast company of people. But when all had been fed, all had been filled, they were then instructed to go and gather up the bread. For the Palestinian has great reverence for bread. The Arab as well. For if you go visit an Arab home, you will find a crumb of bread in the yard, and the Arab won't allow it to lay there to be trodden under foot, for the gifts of God are not to be despised. But he will pick the little crumb up and set it in the crevice in the walls so that birds may eat what God has given for man. And so He gathered up all of the fragments and there were 12 baskets full, one for each of the apostles. And He demonstrated to them that He was adequate, He was utterly sufficient, both for the people, and for His servants.

But notice now in closing, our Lord's purpose for His people. They had not learned yet. He demonstrated. But you see, my dear friend, it is not teaching. It is teaching, but it is not only teaching. It isn't illustration. It is illustration, but it isn't only illustration of truth that makes that truth real in your life. Oh, you've heard truth for years before it became yours. You've seen things for

years before they became real in your life. It isn't just hearing. It is not just seeing. I've said it, and know of no other way to get the truth to your heart but to say it again. All spiritual progress is made in the crisis of desperation, not in contemplation, not simply in considering the Word, and viewing it, and looking at it. That, but not only that. That is important, but that is not enough. It is not enough to have a mental visualization of the words that describe the doctrine, nor even insight into the nature of it. This we can have. Without having come to that place that we have to walk on it. No, truth doesn't become yours because you have seen it illustrated in another's life. It does not become yours because you've heard it described and presented. It becomes yours when you are utterly desperate. The wits end corner is the place of spiritual appropriation. Someone has said, Man's extremity is God's opportunity. I assure you of this. The truth's that you have heard from this pulpit for years and years, and you that have attended for those years, will someday become real in your life, when He has utterly crowded you into the corner and there is no place to turn. Then you will rush out and step on the water, and find that it is solid beneath your feet. And our Lord knew this.

And oh, He wanted them to see that the sufficiency was not of them, but was of Him. And so He sent them away. He sent them away into circumstances that they couldn't control, circumstance that would strip them, circumstances that would crush them and crowd them and bring them to Himself. You see, in His foreknowledge He knew about the storm, just as in His foreknowledge He knew how He was going to feed the multitude. But He also knew that His disciples hadn't learned it yet. And He insisted that they learn this truth, that the sufficiency was of Him, not of them. And so He sent them away, says one of the writers. He sent them away. He sent them out into the sea, and He knew that the storm would come. They were sailors, and if you had met these men as they pushed that boat off the sand and into the water, and the wind filled the sail. One of them sat down and said, Well, we didn't know how to feed the multitude, but I'll tell you one thing we do know, and that is how to get a boat across this lake, and we have been here long enough. Look at that sky. Look at that wind. We are going to get it out. Oh yes, they were quite complacent and quite certain that they knew the answer. But they didn't know Him nearly as well as they should, because that sky that seemingly held nothing but promise of a fair voyage was obedient to the One who made it, and it was His intention that these disciples should become what they ought to be rather than simply have a safe trip.

Listen, my dear, the Lord Jesus is far more concerned about the one who stands in front of you and about you than He is about anything we are doing for Him. The Lord Jesus is far more interested in what is happening in you than what is being done through you. He is far more interested in what He is doing in us than what we are doing for Him, because until He does in us what He wants to do He cannot do through us what He has purposed to do. And He knows what He is sending us into tomorrow, as a Sovereign God that reigns. He knows the storm that is going to break. And we are going to cry, Oh, why, why, why? There is only one answer. Why? Because the "God who loved us and has all things work together to good for them that love Him and are called according to His purpose has said, All things shall fulfill My purpose of conforming them to the image of My Son" (Rom. 8:28-29). So He sent them away. He sent them into the sea. He sent them into the ships. He sent them into the storm. And first they took down the sail and bound it up. And then they began to row, and 7 or 8 miles of lake, and they have come 30 to 40 furlongs, 3 or 4 miles, and they are toiling, and they are bailing. Oh isn't it amazing? Isn't it just amazing how we prefer to row rather than to rest. And to bail, rather than to obey. And to try, rather than to trust.

But the Lord loved them and just let the wind blow until bailing was of no avail, rowing was of no avail. Why? He wanted to prepare them for Himself. And so, What did we find? A demonstration of His sovereignty. Oh, my, do you have any concept of the sovereignty of God? Does your heart rest in His sovereignty? Have you seen One that reigns, do you worship one who rules? Nothing can touch you, nothing can hurt you, because He is on the throne, and He loves you with an everlasting love, and He said, "All things must work together for good to them that love Him." Do you worship a Sovereign God, or have you made someone in your own image and likeness? I am so glad that the God of the Bible is here. And "He is walking on the water," sovereign over storms, and sovereign over circumstances, and sovereign over events (Mat. 14:26). And He is always walking on the storm. It makes no difference what storm you are going through. And I know if all the storms that are represented in this little company were expressed to us we would be in tears before the hour was past. But, my dear heart, I want you to know that the Lord you loved is letting you in the storm and He is walking on it. He is walking on that storm. He is sovereign over it.

Now I see something else. His disciples were afraid. They were not afraid of the storm. This was the hazard of their occupation. So many of them were fishermen. Do you know what they were afraid of? They were afraid of Him. They had learned to fear Him. For here is One that has sent them into the storm and is walking on the storm, and they are afraid. Has fear come into your heart? Do you fear Him with that holy, godly fear that He merits and he deserves? Have you fallen at His feet as did Peter? “Depart from me, Lord, I am a sinful man” (Luk. 5:8). Have you fallen on your face before the revelation of Christ in the midst of the candlesticks with His face, shining as the brightness of the sun? Have you seen Him in His majesty? As the Lord that loves you and makes every circumstance contribute to the end of shaping you and molding you to His image and likeness? Have you seen Him in His majesty? Then if you have, you’ve heard Him in His mercy, and through the midst of your circumstance and the storm, and the grief, and the heartache, you can hear Him saying, “It is I. It is I. Be not afraid” (Mat. 14:27). I have let the wind come. I have let the waves rise. I have let the boat fill. I have done it. “It is I. Be not afraid.” Oh, you need not fear your circumstances if you fear God, because He is a God of circumstances. But if you do not fear God, you will fear everything else. But when you fear God, you need fear nothing else. “It is I. Be not afraid.” And this they knew now prepared them. He knew it prepared them. Their preparation and His preparation met in that moment when they realized that everything that touched Him was ordained in His sovereignty to the end of making them like Him. And so we find our Text. Our Lord Jesus never comes on board your life, my dear, until “He can come willingly received into the ship.” He never intrudes. He knows us. He knows that we would rather bail than pray. He knows that we would rather row than rest. He knows that we would rather die trying than to die to our trying by trusting. We sing, “There is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey,¹” and then having sung the song, we give a contest of prizes to figure out ways that we can do it other than by trusting and praying and resting and praying. He knows it. But you see, He loves us too much to leave us as He finds us. He loves us too much to let us get by with it, and so He is going to let a storm come in my life, and a storm come in your life, and a storm that will strip our sails, and break our rudder, and fill our boat, and when we are sinking in utter desperation we will see Him walking on the storm. And then we can take Him into the ship, Lord, I can’t but You can. Wisdom, and grace, and strengthen, and understanding, and love, and power, and everything. And when He comes, received willingly, to be captain, willingly to rule, and the government is put upon His shoulders, then, do you find what it said? “They were instantly at the land.” He had taken things in His own control. And what they could not do, He did. No. He knows us.

Do I speak today to a weary rower? Do I speak to someone that is tired of bailing? Do I speak to someone that is at wits end corner, that is at the extremity? Do you feel the wind and storm of your own nature? Blowing, howling? Uncleaness, lasciviousness, anger, wrath, vanity, ambition, and inside you is that howling, gale of test and temptation and problem and difficulty? Is that true? And you say, as your little boat flounders in the swell, How, how, how can I get victory? Listen. There is One walking on the water, and if you are “willing to receive Him into the ship,” He is going to give you victory over that nature. You turn the government over to Him, and take your place within the Cross in death, so that [Tape cuts off] He can live in life, then you are going to find that you will be instantly at the shore. Someone that is being tormented by past failures and past sins, haunted by the memory of the past? What can wash away my sin? Oh, can’t you see that here is One that walks on the water. He walks on all the sins of the past. He walks on all the waves of disobedience. He walks there, because He has gone to the Cross, and gone into death, and come up in resurrection, and now He can say, “Thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mat. 9:2). And the storm of memory that haunts and torments can be stopped, and you can be instantly at the shore of peace, because you “willingly received Him into the ship” and all your sin laid upon Him. Do I speak to someone that is weary with a battle against circumstances? Pressures? Family? Needs? Responsibilities? How can you ever survive? How can you ever get from day to night, and from night to day? The burdens are too heavy and the needs too great, and circumstances too pressing. I have good news for you. There is One that is walking on those circumstances, and if you will but bid “Him come and receive Him willingly into the ship” then He is going to take care of those difficulties, and you will be instantly at the shore.

Then there are some that tremble at the fear of tomorrow’s responsibilities. They don’t quite know how to face the future. Utterly inadequate for all the demands that are being made upon them, incapable to face life, trying to escape it, trying to avoid it, trying to get out of it. But they cannot do it. Oh, how can I? Tomorrow is too much for me. And their little ship begins

1 “Trust and Obey” By John H. Sammis, 1887

to flounder and swell, and the waves come and beat, and I see One walking on the water of that tomorrow. He knows all about it. And if you are at the place where you say, I can't, and then you can equally say, He can, and bid Him come willingly into the ship. Invite Him to come. Listen. Listen to Him now. Whatever your burden. Whatever your responsibility, whether it is a great load of guilt and you have come in here under the sentence of death, with your sins like a mountain separating you from God. A Christian that has failed and needs victory and has not found it. But one that is under the midst of pressure of great physical pressure and circumstances of sickness or disappointment, or discouragement, or need, or someone that trembles at the future. Listen to me. I see Him on the water, and He is saying. "It is I. Be not afraid. Be not afraid." Oh, won't you bid this one who alone is worthy to stand on the sea of glass and take the Book, and open the Book, the Book of the future, and the Book of all things that transpire. Won't you "willingly receive Him into the ship" of your life and turn the government over to Him. He is waiting. For everyone that will "willingly receive Him into the ship" will find that they are "instantly at the shore."

Shall we pray. What is your need? What is your problem? What is the storm raging and boiling in your life? Where is the threat? Where is the failure? Where is the heartache? Where is the grief? Where is the fear? Do you not see Him? He is walking on the water. All of these things that threaten are under His feet. And He is saying to you in the midst of the storm, "It is I. Be not afraid." Oh, bid Him come into your life. Put the government of that life upon Him.

Bid Him come into your temptation, whether hurricane rages. Put it on Him. Bid Him come into your home, into your circumstances. Bid Him come into your future. Put the government on His shoulders. Put Him in the midst. Receive Him into the ship. And He will do according to "His wonderful Name, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Just now you are doubting give o'er. Just now, throw open the door. Won't you, and let Jesus, and all that Jesus is come into your heart. Let us stand together for prayer.

O Thou blessed Lord of Glory, tender Shepherd, Thou who dost know us, and see us, and understand us. We thank Thee that Thou art above and beyond all circumstances and conditions, all failures and weakness, all inadequacy and impotency. Thou art willing to be to Thy people everything Thou art as over against everything that they are not. Grant just now that in this closing, sacred moment, that there may be everyone here that bids Thee to come into the ship of their life, and just take over. Thou art so willing, so ready. Great can be the triumph and the victory that will come when we will allow Thee thus to rule. Seal Thy Word to our heart. Let it be upon us as a fragrant bouquet of truth, as a clear light to guide us to Thyself. Lead us into all that Thou hast for us, Father, and now may Thy grace and mercy and peace, be and abide, and continue with us, now and until we meet again, in Jesus worthy Name. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, June 10, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.