

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TWO "COMES."

A Sermon

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Revelation xxii. 17.

OUR text stands at the end of the Book even as this day stands at the end of the year: and it is full of gospel even as we would make our closing Sabbath discourse. It would seem as if the Holy Spirit were loath to put down the pen while so many remained unbelieving, notwithstanding the testimony of the inspired word, and therefore ere he closes the canon of Holy Scripture and guards it against all addition or mutilation with most solemn words, he gives one more full, free, earnest, gracious invitation to thirsty souls to come to Christ and drink. So on this last page of the year I would fain write another gospel invitation that those who have not hitherto believed our report may, even on this last day of the feast, incline their ear and accept the message of salvation. Ere yet the midnight bell proclaims the birth of a new year, may you be born to God: at any rate once more shall the truth by which men are regenerated be lovingly brought under your attention. I ask those of you who have the Master's ear to put up this request to him just now, that if the arrows have missed the mark on the previous fifty-two Sabbaths they may strike the target this time, being directed by the divine Spirit. Pray also that if some have kept the door of their hearts fast closed against the Lord Jesus till now, he may himself come in the preaching of the Word this morning, and put in his hand by the hole of the door, that their hearts may be moved for him. In answer to that prayer we shall be sure to get a blessing. Let us expect it and act upon the expectation, and we shall see men flying to Jesus as a cloud, and as doves to their windows.

Are not the words of our text the words of the Lord Jesus? Can they be regarded as the words of John? I think not, for they follow so closely upon the undoubted language of Jesus in the former verse. Thus runs the passage:—"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto

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you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." We can hardly, I think, divide the paragraph, and we must, it seems to me, regard our text as the words of the risen Jesus, that morning star whose cheering beams foretel the glorious day. The lover of men's souls had not quite done speaking to sinners; there was a little more to say, and here he says it. The divine Redeemer, leaning from his throne whereon he sits as the reward of his accomplished work, and bending over sinners with the same love which led him to die for them says, "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Looking at the words, therefore, in that golden light as coming from the dear lips of the Well-beloved, let us notice first, *the heavenward cry of prayer*—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." These voices go upward to Christ. Then, secondly, let us hear *the earthward cry of invitation*—"Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"; that cry goes outward and downward towards needy and sorrowing spirits. Then, thirdly, we shall pause awhile to notice *the relation between these two cries*; for the coming of Christ is connected with the coming of sinners: and then, as best we can, we shall *observe and expect the response to the two cries*; both from him who sitteth in the heavens and from souls thirsting here below. O divine Spirit, bless thou the Word.

I. First, then, our text begins with THE HEAVENWARD CRY OF PRAYER, "*The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.*" I think it will be evident, if you read carefully, that this cannot be interpreted as being only the voice of the Spirit and the bride *to the sinner*. Surely the sense requires us to regard this cry of "come" as addressed to our Lord Jesus, who in a previous verse had been saying, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me." We may see the second included in it, but it will never do to exclude the first. We shall not have dealt honestly with the words before us unless we regard them first as spoken upwards towards our Lord, whose coming is our great hope.

The matter of this cry is first to be noticed—it is the coming of Christ. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." This is and always has been the universal cry of the church of Jesus Christ. There is no one common theory about the exact meaning of that coming, but there is one common desire for it, in some form or other. Some of us are expecting the bodily coming, because the angel said when the cloud concealed the rising Christ, "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." We therefore look for his descent upon the earth in person, to be here literally among us. Some expect that when he comes it will be to reign upon the earth, making all things new and bringing to his people a glorious period of a thousand years, in which there shall be perpetual Sabbath rest. Others think that when he cometh he will come to judge the world, and that the day of his appearing is rather to be regarded as the end of all things and the conclusion of this dispensation than as the commencement of the age of gold. There are some

who think the millennium all a dream, and the coming of Christ in person to be a mere fancy, but they believe that he will come spiritually, and they are looking for a time when the gospel shall spread very wonderfully, and there will be an extraordinary power about the ministrations of the word, so that nations shall run unto him and be converted to his truth. Now it would be very interesting to take up these various statements and speculations, but we do not want to do so, because after all, in whatever way men look at it, all the true people of God still desire the coming of Christ, and so long as he draws near they are content. They may have more or less light about the manner of it, but still the coming of Christ has been ever since the time when he departed the great wish and desire, yea and the agonizing prayer of the church of God. "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus," is the cry of the whole host of the Lord's elect. It is true that some have not always desired this coming from motives of the most commendable kind, and many become more than ever earnest in this prayer when they have been in a state of disappointment and sorrow, but still that which they desire is a right thing, and a promised blessing to be given in its time. I suppose the file of sorrow will always give a keener edge to the desire of Christ's coming. Luther on one occasion, when much discouraged, said, "May the Lord come at once! Let him cut the whole matter short with the day of judgment; for there is no amendment to be expected." When we get into this state of mind the desire, though right in appearance, may not be quite as pure as we think. Desires and prayers which grow out of unbelief and petulance can hardly be of the very best order. Perhaps when we more patiently wait and quietly hope, we may not be quite so feverishly anxious for the speedy coming, and yet our state of mind may be more sober and more truly watchful and acceptable than when we showed more apparent eagerness. Waiting must sit side by side with desiring: patience must blend with hope. The Lord's "quickly" may not be my "quickly"; and if so, let him do what seemeth him good. It may be a better thing after all for our Lord to tarry a little longer, that so by a more lengthened conflict he may the better manifest the patience of the saints and the power of the eternal Spirit. It may be the Lord may linger yet a while, and if so, while the church desires his speedy advent, she will not quarrel with her Master, nor dictate to him, nor even wish to know the times and the seasons. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," is her heart's inmost wish, but as for the details of his coming she leaves them in his hands.

Having noted the matter of the cry, let us next observe *the persons crying*. The Spirit is first mentioned—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." And why does the Holy Ghost desire the coming of the Lord Jesus? At present the Spirit is, so to speak, the vicegerent of this dispensation upon earth. Our Lord Jesus is gone into the heavens, for it was expedient for him to go, but the Comforter whom the Father hath sent in his name hath taken his place as our teacher, and abides on earth continually as the witness to the truth, and the worker for it in the minds of men. But the Spirit of God is daily grieved during this season of long suffering and conflict. How much he is provoked all the world over it is not possible for us to know! The forty years in

the wilderness must have become as nothing compared with nineteen centuries of rebellious generations. The ungodly vex him, they reject his testimony, and resist his operations. And, alas, the saints grieve him too. You and I have, I fear, grieved him often during the past year; and so he desireth the end of this evil estate, and saith to our Lord Jesus, "Come." Beside, the Spirit's great object and desire is to glorify Christ; even as our Lord saith, "He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shew them unto you." Now, as the coming of Christ will be the full manifestation of the Redeemer's glory, the Spirit therefore desireth that he may come and take to himself his great power, and reign. The Holy Spirit seals us "unto the day of redemption," having ever an eye to that great event; his work tendeth towards its completion in the day of the appearing of the sons of God. He "is the earnest of our inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession." Therefore doth the Spirit have sympathy in the groanings of his saints for the glorious appearing, and it is in this connection especially that he is described as helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. In this sense the Spirit saith "Come"; indeed, all such cries of "Come" in this world are of his prompting.

Our text next tells us that, "the bride saith, Come." We all know that the bride is the church, but perhaps we have not noticed the peculiarity of her name. It is not "The Spirit and *the church* say, Come," but "the Spirit and the bride," for she saith "Come" always more fervently when she realizes her near and dear relationship to her Lord, and all that it involves. Now, a bride is one whose marriage is near, either as having just happened or as close at hand. She is far more than merely espoused—either she is married or about to be, although the actual marriage feast may not have been eaten. So is the church very nearly arrived at the grand hour, when it shall be said "the marriage of the Lamb is come and his bride hath made herself ready"; and because of that she is full of joy at the prospect of hearing the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." Who marvelleth that it is so? It would be unnatural if there were no desire on the part of the church to see her beloved Lord and Head. Is it not as it should be when the bride saith "Come"?

I wish to call your attention to the fact that while I have made two of the persons mentioned in the text for the purpose of discoursing upon them in due order, yet they are not divided in the passage before us. It does not say the Spirit saith "come" and the bride saith "come," but "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." That is to say, the Spirit of God speaketh by the church when he crieth "Come," and the church crieth unto Christ for his coming because she is moved thereto of the Holy Spirit. True prayer is always a joint work; the Holy Spirit within us writes acceptable desires upon our hearts and then we present them. The Holy Ghost does not plead apart from our desiring and believing: we must ourselves desire and will and plead and agonize because the Spirit of God worketh in us so to will and to do. We plead with God because we are prompted and guided by his Holy Spirit. Our pleadings, which go up to heaven for the advent of Jesus, are the Holy Ghost crying in the hearts of the blood-bought. The church herself prays in the

Holy Ghost, instantly crying day and night for the fulfilment of the greatest of all the covenant promises.

"Come, Lord, and tarry not;
Bring the long-look'd-for day;
Oh, why these years of waiting here,
These ages of delay?"

"Come, for thy saints still wait;
Daily ascends their sigh;
The Spirit and the bride say, Come;
Dost thou not hear the cry?"

The next clause of the text indicates that each separate believer should breathe the same desire, "Let him that heareth say, Come." Brethren, this will be the index of your belonging to the bride, the token of your sharing in the one Spirit, and being joined unto the one body, if you unite with the Spirit and the bride in saying, "Come." For no ungodly man truly desireth Christ's coming; but on the contrary he desireth to get away from him, and forget his very existence. To delight in drawing near unto the Lord Jesus Christ is an evidence of our election and calling; to wish more and more fully to know him and to dwell more near to him is the token of our having been reconciled unto God by his death, and of our having a new nature implanted in us: to long to see him manifested in fulness of glory is the ensign of a true soldier of the cross. Do you feel this? Do you desire to be better acquainted with the Lord Jesus? You have heard the gospel, do you say as the church doth, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Alas, to many the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light, and they cannot desire it, for it will be a day of terror and confusion unto them; but unto such as have heard and believed in the precious name of the Son of God it will be joy and peace, and therefore the cry of their heart is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

This utterance of "Come" by him that heareth it is the mark of his joyful consent to the fact that Christ shall come. It is well, my friend, if when thou hearest that Christ will come thou sayest, "Let him come." If he come to reign, let him, for blessed be his name, who should reign but he? If he descend to judge the earth, let him come, for we shall be justified at his bar. His ends and objects in coming cannot but be fraught with infinite benefit to us and glory to our God, and therefore we would not delay his chariot wheels by so much as an hour.

"Hasten, Lord! the promised hour;
Come in glory and in power;
Still thy foes are unsubdued;
Nature sighs to be renew'd.
Time has nearly reached its sum,
All things with thy bride say 'Come';
Jesus, whom all worlds adore,
Come and reign for evermore!"

The saying of "come" by each true hearer is the sign that his heart responds to the doctrine which he has been taught. We have received it by revelation that Christ is to come, and our soul saith, "Even so. Come Lord Jesus; it is our happiness that it should be so."

Thus have we mentioned the persons by whom this cry is uttered,

and now let us add a word upon *the tense in which the cry is put*. It is in the present tense. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." The Spirit and the bride are anxious that Christ should come at once, and he that knoweth Christ and loveth him desireth also that he should not tarry. Look, my brethren, is it not time as far as our poor judgments go that Jesus should come? See how iniquity abounds! Behold our very streets, how foul they are with sin! See how errors are multiplied: do they not swarm even in the church of God itself? Have not heresies come down like birds of prey upon the sacrifice, to pollute even the altars of the Most High? See at this present time how sceptics defy the living God, how they hiss out from between their teeth the question, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were?" Behold how Antichrist also stalks boldly through the land. Superstitions which your fathers could not bear are set up among you yet again, and the graven images, crosses, crucifixes and sacraments, gods many and lords many, of old Rome have come back to England again, and they are worshipped in her national church. In England, stained with the blood of martyrs, once again the mark of the beast is to be seen on the foreheads of those whom she feeds to teach her people! Is it not time that the Lord should come? O hoary systems of superstition, what else can shake ye from your thrones! O gods that have long ruled over superstitious minds, who else can hurl you to the moles and to the bats? Ye know him who made you quiver on your thrones on that night when he was born in Bethlehem's manger, and ye may well tremble, for when he cometh it will be with an iron rod to dash you into shivers. "Even so," we cry, "come, Lord Jesus: come quickly. Amen."

II. Now, secondly, let us listen to THE EARTHWARD CRY OF INVITATION TO MEN. I must confess I cannot quite tell you how it is that the sense in my text glides away from the coming of Christ to the earth into the coming of sinners to Christ, but it does. Like colours which blend, or strains of music which melt into each other, so the first sense slides into the second. This almost insensible transition seems to me to have been occasioned by the memory of the fact that the coming of Christ is not desirable to all mankind. There are the unbelievers who have not obeyed him, and when they hear the Spirit and the bride say come, straightway they begin to tremble, and they say within themselves, "What if he should come! Alas, we rejected him, and his coming will be our destruction." I think I hear some such sinners weeping and wailing at the very thought of the Lord's coming, for they know that they also who have pierced him must behold him and weep because of him. It seems almost cruel on the part of the bride and the Spirit to be saying come, when that coming must be for the overthrow of all the adversaries of the Lord: and so Jesus himself seems gently to turn aside the prayer of his people while he pleads with the needy ones. He lets the prayer flow towards himself, but yet directs its flow towards poor sinners also. He himself seems to say, "Ye bid me come, but I, as the Saviour of men, look at your brothers and your sisters who are yet in the far country, the other sheep which are not yet of the fold, whom also I must bring in, and in answer to your cry to me to come I speak

to those wandering ones, and say, 'Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'" Is not that the way in which the sense glides from its first direction?

Now, *from whom does this cry arise?*

It first comes *from Jesus*. It is he who says, "Let him that is athirst come." The passage so stands, as I have already said, that we cannot but believe this verse to have been the utterance of Him who is the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. He out of heaven cries to the unconverted, "Let him that is athirst come." Will they refuse him that speaketh? Shall Jesus himself invite them, and will they turn a deaf ear?

But next, it is the call of *the Spirit of God*. The Spirit says, "Come." This Book which he has written, on every page says to men, "Come! Come to Jesus." This is the cry of the Spirit in the preaching of the word. What mean sermons and discourses but "Come sinner, come?" And those secret motions of power upon the conscience, those times when the heart grows calm even amid dissipation, and thought is forced upon the mind, those are the movements of the Spirit of God by which he is showing man his danger and revealing to him his refuge, and so is saying, "Come." All over the world wherever there is a Bible and a preacher the Spirit is saying "Come."

And this is the speech of *the church* too in conjunction with the Spirit, for the Spirit speaks with the bride and the bride speaks by the Spirit. The church is always saying "Come." This is indeed the meaning of her Sabbath gatherings, of her testimony in the pulpit, of her teaching in the schools, of her prayers and her exhortations. Everywhere, poor wandering hearts, the church of God is saying to you, "Come"; or if she does not do so she is not acting in her true character as the bride of Christ. For this purpose is there a church in the world at all; if it were not for this our Lord might take his people home as soon as they have believed, but they are kept here to be a seed to keep the truth alive in the world, and their daily earnest cry to you is "Come, come to Jesus." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

The next giver of the invitation is spoken of as "*him that heareth*." If you have had an ear to hear, and have heard the gospel to your own salvation, the very next thing you have to do is to say to those around you, "Come." Go and speak to anybody that you meet, to everybody that you meet, according as opportunity and occasion shall be given you, and say what all the church saith and what the Spirit is saying—namely, "Come." Give your Master's invitation, distribute the testimony of his loving will, and bid poor sinners come to Jesus. Your children and your servants,—bid them come; your neighbours and your friends,—bid them come; the strangers and the far-off ones,—bid them come; the harlot and the thief,—bid such come; those that are in the highways and the hedges, those who are far-off from God by abominable works—say also unto all these "Come." Because you have heard the message and proved its truth, go you and call in others to the feast of love. Oh, if there were more of these individual proclaimers what blessings would descend upon London! I do not know how many believers in Christ there are present in this house, but I do know that there are five thousand of us associated in church fellowship

at this Tabernacle; and if the whole of these five thousand would but begin to bear witness for Christ with all their might, there would be salt enough even within this one house to season all London, with God's blessing upon our efforts. My brothers and sisters, let us not be slow to address ourselves to those to whom the Spirit of God within us, and the voice of Jesus from above, and the cry of the whole church is addressed. Let each individual member take up the note of invitation till all around the trembling sinner hears the encouraging cry of "Come."

Now, notice *the remarkably encouraging character of this "Come,"* which is given by the Spirit and the bride. One part of it is directed to the thirsty: "Let him that is athirst come." By thirst is meant necessity, and an appetite for its supply. Dost thou feel thyself guilty, and dost thou desire pardon?—thou art a thirsty one. Art thou disquieted and filled with unrest, and dost thou long to be pacified in heart?—thou art a thirsty one. Is there a something, thou knowest not perhaps what it is, for which thou art sighing, and crying, and pining?—thou art a thirsty one, and to thee is the invitation most positively and distinctly given, "Let him that is athirst come."

But how much I rejoice that the second half of the invitation does not contain even an apparent limit, as this first sentence has been thought to do! I regard the thirst here mentioned as by no means requiring of any man that he should have gone through a process of horror on account of guilt, or should have been overwhelmed with conviction, and driven to despair of salvation. I believe that any desire and any longing will come under the description, of "thirst"; but since some have stumbled at it, and have said again and again, "I feel I do not thirst enough," see how sweetly the second clause of our text puts it—"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Whether thou be thirsty or not, yet hast thou a will to drink? hast thou a will to be saved? a will to be cleansed from sin? a will to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus? Dost thou will to have eternal life? Then thus saith the Spirit to thee, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Now, notice three vast doors through which the hugest and most elephantine sinner that ever made the earth shake beneath the weight of his guilt may go. Here are the three doors. "*Whosoever*"—"will"—"*freely*." "*Whosoever*," there is the first door. "*Whosoever*"—then what man dare have the impudence to say that he is shut out? If you say that you cannot come in under "*whosoever*," I ask you how you dare narrow a word which is in itself so broad, so infinite. "*Whosoever*"—that must mean every man that ever lived, or ever shall live, while yet he is here and wills to come. Well, then, the word "*will*." There is nothing about past character, nor present character; nothing about knowledge, or feeling, nor anything else but the will: "*Whosoever will*." Speak of the gate standing ajar! This looks to me like taking the door right off the hinges and carrying it away. "*Whosoever will*." There is no hindrance whatever in your way. And then "*freely*." God's gifts are given without any expectation or recompense, or any requirements and conditions—"Let him take the water of life freely." Thou hast not to bring thy good feelings, or good desires, or good works, but come and take freely what God gives you for

nothing. You are not even to bring repentance and faith in order to obtain grace, but you are to come and accept repentance and faith as the gifts of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit. What broad gates of mercy these are! How wide the entrance which love has prepared for coming souls! "*Whosoever!*" "*Will!*" "*Freely!*"

Observe how the invitation sums up the work the sinner is called upon to do. First, he is bidden to *come*. "*Whosoever will, let him come.*" Now, to come to Christ means simply for the soul to draw near to him by trusting him. You are not asked to bring a load with you, nor to work for Christ in order to salvation, but just to come to him. Nothing is said about the style of coming, come running or creeping, come boldly or timidly, for if you do but come to Jesus, he will in no wise cast you out. A simple reliance upon the Lord Jesus is the one essential for eternal life.

Then the next direction is "*take.*" "*Whosoever will, let him take.*" That is all. That word "*take*" is a grand word to express the gospel. The world's gospel is "*bring*": Christ's gospel is "*take.*" Nature's gospel is "*make*": just change the letter and you have the gospel of grace which is "*take.*" There is the water, dear friends, you have not to dig a well to find it, you have only to take it. There is the bread of heaven, you have not to grind the flour or bake the loaf, you have only to take it. There is a garment woven from the top throughout, and without seam; you have not to add a fringe to it, you have only to take it. The way of salvation may be summed up in the four letters of the word "*take.*" Do you desire Christ? take him. Do you want pardon? take it. Do you need a new heart? take it. Do you want peace on earth? take it. Do you want heaven hereafter? take it—that is all. "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*"

And there is one other word which I love to dwell on, and it comes twice over "*let him* that is athirst come, and whosoever will *let him take.*" It is graciously said, *let him*. It seems to me as if the Lord Jesus Christ saw a poor soul standing thirsty at the flowing crystal fountain of his love, and the devil standing there whispered to him, "*You see the sacred stream, but it flows for others. It is what you need, but you must not have it, it is not for you.*" Listen, there is a voice from beyond the clouds which cries aloud, "*Let him take it!*" Stand back devil, let the willing one come! He is putting down his lip to drink—he understands it now—but there comes rushing upon him a host of his old sins like so many winged harpies, and they scream out to him, "*Go back, you must not draw nigh, this fountain is not for you: this pure crystal stream must not be defiled by such leprous lips as yours.*" Again there comes from the throne of love this blessed password, "*Let him come and let him take.*" It is as when a man is in court and is called for, to go into the witness-box. He is standing in the crowd, and his name is called: what happens? As soon as he hears his name he begins to push through the throng to reach his place. "*What are you at?*" says one. "*I am called,*" says he. "*Stand back; why do you push so?*" says another. "*I am called by the judge,*" says he. A big policeman demands, "*Why are you making such confusion in court?*" "*But,*" says the man, "*I am called. My name was called out, and I must come.*" If he cannot come, if it is

not possible for him to get through the throng, one of the authorities calls out, "Make way for that man—he is summoned by the court. Officers, clear a passage and let him come." Now the Lord Jesus calls the thirsty-one and he says, "Whosoever will, let him come!" Make way doubts, make way sins, make way fears, make way devils, make way all of you for Jesus Christ the great king and judge of all has said, "Let him come!" Who shall hinder when Jesus permits? He who is divinely called shall surely come to Jesus. Come he shall, whoever may stand in his way. This morning I feel as if I could come to Jesus over again, and I will do so. Do you not feel the same, my beloved brethren? Well then, dear brother or sister, after you have so done turn round and proclaim this precious gospel invitation to all around you, and say to them "Come and take the water of life freely."

III.—The third point is THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO COMINGS. Is there any relation between the coming of Christ from heaven to earth, and the coming of poor sinful creatures to Christ and trusting him?

There is this relation, first, they are both suggested in this passage, by the closing of the scriptural canon. John is about to write by the voice of the Lord that none are to add to or take from the completed Book of God. The church says, "If there are no more prophets to proclaim the mind of God, no more apostles to write with infallible authority, and no more instructors to give forth new revelations, or bring new promises, then it only remaineth that the Lord should come. "Then," says she, "Come, Lord Jesus." And here are the sinners standing round, and they hear that no other gospel is to be expected, no more revelations are to be added to those which are in this book, there will be no other atonement, no other way of salvation, therefore it is their wisdom to come at once to Jesus. It is because the Book was about to receive its *finis* that the Spirit and the bride unitedly cried to the sinners to come at once. No fresh gospel is to be expected, therefore let them come at once. Why should they tarry any longer? The oxen and fatlings are killed, come to the supper! All things are ready, there is nothing more to be done, or to be revealed; upon us the ends of the earth have come. "It is finished" hath rung through earth and heaven, therefore—

"Come and welcome, sinner come!"

I think I perceive another connection, namely, that those people who in very truth love Christ enough to cry to him continually to come are sure to love sinners also, and to say to them also, "Come." Not but what there are some who talk a great deal about Christ's coming, and yet manifest but small care for other men's souls. Well, it is talk; the profession of looking for the second advent is nothing but talk when it does not lead people to cry to perishing men, "Come to Christ." He who loves Christ as he should loves sinners also; and that man who loves Christ so very much that he is quite wrapped up in himself, and forgets the dying millions around him, and stands star-gazing into heaven, expecting to see a sudden glory, to take himself away, does not understand what he saith: for if he loved his Lord he would set to

work for him, and would show that he expected the King to come by endeavouring to extend his kingdom.

There is this connection also, that before Christ comes a certain number of his elect must be ingathered. He shall not come until an appointed company shall have been brought to eternal life by the preaching of the Word. Oh then, brethren, it is ours to labour that the wanderers may come home, for so we are, as far as lieth in us, hastening the time when our Beloved himself shall come.

Once more, there is a sort of coming of Christ which, though it be not the first meaning here, may be included in it, for it touches the centre of the sinner's coming to Christ. Because, brethren, when we cry, "Come, Lord Jesus," if he shall answer us by giving us of his Spirit more fully, so that he comes to us spiritually, then penitent souls will assuredly be brought to his feet. We know this, that wherever the Lord himself is in a meeting, hearts are sure to be broken and repentance is certain to be manifested. Wherever Jesus Christ is in power there must be a revival, for dead souls must come to life in him. The great thing we want above all others is a grip of that glorious promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," and as we in this sense obtain the coming of the Lord, we shall see sinners come and take of the water of life.

IV. Well then, lastly, WHAT ARE THE RESPONSES? We sent up a cry to heaven, and said, "Come." The response is, "Behold, I come quickly." That is eminently satisfactory. You may have to wait awhile, but the cry is heard, and if the Lord should not come in your lifetime, the same preparation of heart which made you look for his coming will be blessedly useful to you if he sends his messenger to take you home by death. The same waiting and watching will answer in either case, so you need not be under any distress about which of the two shall happen. Christ will descend to earth as surely as he ascended to heaven, and when he cometh there will be victory to the right and to the true, and his saints shall reign with him.

And now concerning this other cry of "Come." We ask sinners to come. We have asked them in a fourfold voice: Jesus, the Spirit, the bride, and him that heareth, they have all said, "Come." Will they come? Brethren and sisters, it is a question which I cannot answer. You must not ask *me*, for I do not know; but you had better ask the persons themselves: they are of age, ask *them*. Take care that you do ask them before they get out of the Tabernacle this morning. They know, and therefore they can tell you whether they mean to come or not. This I will say to them,—my dear friends, I do trust that this last day of the year may be to you a day of mercy. The Jews had a feast of ingatherings at the end of the year, and I earnestly pray that we may have an ingathering of precious souls to Christ ere the year quite runs out: that would be a grand finish to this year of grace, and a sweet encouragement for the future.

But suppose you do not come. Well, you have been invited. If a Christmas feast is provided for the poor, and a number of beggars are standing shivering outside in the sleet and snow, and will not come in though earnestly bidden, we say "Well, you have been invited: what more do you want?" Remember, also, that you have been invited very

earnestly. The Spirit, the bride, and him that heareth, and Jesus himself,—they have all said to you “Come.” I am as the man that heareth, and I have said, “Come.” I do not know how to say it more earnestly than I have said it. Oh, how would my soul delight if every one here did come to Christ at this moment! I would ask no greater joy out of heaven to crown this year with. You are invited, and you are earnestly invited, what more do you want? If you never come, you will have this thought to haunt you for ever—“I was invited and pressed again and again, but I would not come.”

I want you to remember, too, that you are called to come now, at once. You may not be bidden to come to-morrow for several reasons: you may not be alive, or there may be no earnest person near you to invite you. Can there be a better day than to-day? You have always said “To-morrow,” yet where are you now? Not a bit forwarder some of you than you were ten years ago. Do you recollect that sermon when you were made to tremble so, and you said, “Please God, I get out of this, I will seek his face,” but you postponed it, and are you any forwarder now? You remember the story of the countryman who would not cross the river just yet, but sat down and said he would wait until all the water had gone by. He waited long in vain, and he might have waited for ever, for rivers are always flowing. You too are waiting till a more convenient season shall come, and all the difficulties shall have gone by. Be quit of such supreme folly. There always will be difficulty, the river will always flow. O man, be wise, plunge into it and swim across. Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. Oh that you would believe in Jesus Christ! May his Spirit lead you to do so now.

“Only trust him! only trust him!
 Only trust him *now*!
 He will save you! he will save you!
 He will save you *now*!”

Cast yourselves upon the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus, and the great work is done. The Lord help you to do so. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation xxii.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—917, 343, 509.