

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE.

A Sermon

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“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.”—
John xxi. 7.

I AM going to speak, on this occasion, to my brethren and sisters who are workers for Christ. When our Lord met his apostles by the lake, and provided for them that memorable meal, he did not think it out of place to say to Peter, “Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.” These practical exhortations were regarded by him as quite in keeping with holy fellowship; and so, though we are coming to the communion table at the close of this service, I feel that I am doing right in speaking upon practical matters to you my fellow-labourers and fellow-soldiers in the work and warfare of Christ; and I pray that God will, through me, speak to all here who love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

You know that we read, in the Gospels according to Luke and John, of two miraculous draughts of fishes* The one that is recorded in this chapter from which our text is taken was in several respects similar to that which was wrought at an earlier period of our Lord's history.

Before he called his apostles, he wrought the miracle of giving them a great haul of fish after they had toiled all the night, and had taken nothing; and then, after he had died upon the cross, and risen from the grave, he repeated the miracle in almost identical fashion. I think there was a great lesson which our Saviour intended his disciples to learn from that repetition. The miracle was a picture, and he wanted them to look upon it, and catch the

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 443, “The Two Draughts of Fishes.”

idea it was meant to convey; and as they had probably not all caught it the first time, he held the picture up before them again, that they might have another opportunity of learning the lesson which he had intended it to teach them.

You notice that, in both instances, they had toiled, they had toiled all the night, but they had toiled in vain. The night was the best season for fishing, as it is still. They had toiled in the place where they had often caught fish before, for they were experienced fishermen, apt at their craft; yet after using all the means that had been successful at other times, they were unsuccessful, for they had taken nothing. They had toiled perseveringly too, for it was not only *at* night that they had toiled, but *all* the night. From the time when they pushed forth from the shore, in the moonlight, until the morning star warned them of the dawning of the new day, they had toiled, yet they had taken nothing.

This teaches us that we may work for Christ, and try to win souls for him, and do that work at the best time, and in the best way, and even persevere in doing it, and yet be unsuccessful. We must be unsuccessful if, like the disciples, we are labouring without the Master's presence. In both instances, the turning-point was when the Master came. On the first occasion, he borrowed Peter's boat, and preached a sermon from it to the crowd upon the shore, and then he said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." In the second case, he bade the disciples "cast the net on the right side of the ship." But, in both instances, it was the appearance of Jesus that filled the net, and filled it so miraculously that the despairing toilers of the night realized that Someone who was more than man had spoken to them, and fell down to worship him as divine. So, whenever Jesus comes to his workers, however unsuccessful they may have been, they are sure to succeed when he is there; yes, and to succeed beyond their own expectations; just as the disciples were surprised that, by the same hands which all night had taken nothing, a hundred and fifty and three great fishes should be taken, and out of the same nets which were empty all the night, (save here and there a piece of tangled weed to mock their hopes,) there should come so many great fishes upon which they and others might be feasted to the full. The apostles could not do anything without their Lord, nor can we; so the main point for us to remember is that we need Jesus Christ to come into our midst, and this point I shall try to drive home with all my might, praying God the Holy Spirit to stir up the hearts of his people so that they may have a great longing to be useful in the winning of souls, and realize that this can only be achieved by those who enjoy true fellowship with Christ.

I. I want, first, to show THE DISSIMILARITY AND THE SIMILARITY OF OUR POSITION TO THAT OF THE APOSTLES UPON THIS OCCASION.

First, *there was a dissimilarity, in which the advantage is altogether on our side.* The apostle Peter and his brethren had been fishing unsuccessfully, but they had not been commanded to fish. They may or may not have been right in fishing at that time; but,

at any rate, they were doing it on their own account. Peter said, "I go a fishing." It was his own work, done entirely in accordance with his own will; Christ had not bidden him go a fishing. But, in our case, brethren and sisters in Christ, we have our Lord's commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." We have received this divine commission, so that, when we preach the gospel, we are not fishing as amateurs or self-sent volunteers, but as those who are sent by the Most High to do his bidding. When he commissions anyone, there is a sort of implied guarantee that he will give him success. At any rate, he will not send his servant upon a fool's errand; but, by some means or other, he who gives the authority will be sure to give the power that is needed to go with it. "Wisdom is justified of *all* her children." You, dear brethren and sisters, in trying to serve God, each of you in your proper sphere, have done what you were sent to do, for Jesus has said to you as he said to his disciples. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Remember that passage almost at the end of the Revelation, "Let him that heareth say, Come." Having heard the gospel, you have tried to say "Come" to the people, and you have not gone beyond your commission in doing so, for you were commanded to do it. Every believer is a priest; under the Christian dispensation, there is no other priesthood save that of our Lord Jesus Christ and that which is common to every believer in him; so that when you, having believed on him, have gone to speak of him to others, you have only exercised that royal priesthood which is rightly yours, for he "hath made us kings and priests unto God." So, first, the apostles went fishing without having any commission to fish, and therefore they were unsuccessful; but we have an advantage over them because, in the gospel fishery, every true child of God who casts the net is commissioned by his Master to do so.

The disciples also had not their Master with them. All the night when they were casting the net, and drawing it in, and finding nothing in it, they were by themselves; but that is not the case with us. As a church, we can say that we have had the Master's presence with us these many years. Oftentimes, in our assemblies, we have been as sure of his presence as we can ever be sure of anything. Our hearts have been rejoiced, and purified, and sanctified by gazing upon him by faith. There have been prayer-meetings in which I hope all of us have felt bowed down and humbled like Peter was when the Master was in his boat, and there have been times of solemn rejoicing over converted sinners in which the Lord Jesus has been manifestly in our midst. His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," has been most graciously fulfilled in our experience; and we therefore bless the Saviour that we have not to wait for him to come to us, for he has long been with us, and has never left us. These many years the simple preaching of Jesus Christ and him crucified has filled this house of prayer as it is to-night. People know that there is nothing to be heard here but "the old, old story" of the crucified Saviour, yet let the weather be as rigorous as it may, still will the crowds come to

hear the Word of the Lord, and in this we do rejoice and evermore will rejoice. In this respect also we have the advantage over the fishermen on the sea of Galilee. And so we have in another point,—because the Master was not with them, they caught nothing; but it cannot be said of us that we have taken nothing. I do not know that it would be right for us to try to compute how many souls have professed to find the Saviour during the years in which we have worked together, but I believe, brethren, we may say this to the glory of God, and to the honour of the simple gospel that we have preached, that the number who have joined this church alone can only be spoken of by thousands, and that if we were to speak of tens of thousands, ay, and many tens of thousands, who here and elsewhere have found the Saviour under the Word preached by us, we should not exaggerate in the least. We put the crown upon the head of our Master, but what joy we feel that it has been so! Suppose that he had left us, vain would it have been for us to preach the Word, even with earnestness, for earnestness alone will not convert souls. There must be the presence of Jesus to bless men; and it has been with us, year after year, even unto this day, glory be to his holy name.

In these points, then, our case is dissimilar to that of the apostles when they were toiling all the night, and had taken nothing.

But we are precisely like the apostles in certain other points; the first of which is that we should have taken nothing” if the Master had not helped us. No child would have come from the Sunday-school to say, “I love the Saviour, and wish to confess my faith in him, and to unite with the church here.” No young woman would have come out of that large and blessed Bible-class if the Lord had not put the right words into the lips of the sister who speaks for him there. No young man would have been converted in our senior classes if the Spirit of God had not gone with the conductors; and from this pulpit no Word of life would have been spoken if it had not been first given to us by God, and then sent home to the hearts of our hearers by the Holy Spirit. We should have “taken nothing” without our Lord.

And even now, brethren, our success is wonderfully like the non-success of the apostles, for we have scarcely taken anything in comparison with what still needs to be taken. Even when we speak of tens of thousands converted, what are they in comparison with the millions all around us in this vast city? When God gives us an increase of a hundred or a hundred and twenty in a month, we are glad and thankful; but, large as those numbers are, what are they compared with the perishing myriads of London alone? Why should we not have three thousand converts in a day as on the day of Pentecost? Why is it that our churches are not multiplied till they cover this city in every part? Why does not the old Church of Christ, (for such we are,) the old Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, come more to the front instead of lingering in the background? It is because we have not yet the fulness of the Master’s power as we must have it, and desire to have it to the praise of his glory. Christ’s presence, if he would but come among us in the

fulness of his strength, would do so much more for us than anything that we have ever seen yet that we should be as much astounded by the increase as the apostles were by the two great draughts of fishes. Christ had but to will it, and the fish came swimming in shoals to the net; and he has but to will it, and souls will be converted by millions to himself and his gospel. He had but to give his disciples the direction as to where to cast the net, and the same net that had been empty became full; and he has but to teach his ministers how to preach, and touch their lips with a burning coal off the altar to fire them with a Pentecostal enthusiasm, and they would speak in a way in which as yet they never have spoken, and with a power they have never yet experienced. Such days are promised, and they will surely come. We are not straitened in God; we are straitened in ourselves. If we have not those glorious days of ingathering, it is because some sin of ours still keeps the Master's glory from us. Oh, let us turn to him, and may he graciously turn to us!

"Let our mutual love be fervent,
 Make us prevalent in prayers;
 Let each one esteem'd thy servant
 Shun the world's bewitching snares.
 Lord, revive us,
 All our help must come from thee!"

II. Now, secondly, I have to speak upon THE MEANS WHICH WE ARE TO USE SO AS TO GAIN OUR MASTER'S PRESENCE. I have tried to show you that all our success must come from him, and all that he gives us must be ascribed to him; so how can we secure his presence? We have it in a measure; how can we have it more fully?

Well, let us always recollect that *he comes just where he wills to come*. There is absolute sovereignty about the work of Christ in the kingdom of his grace. As the wind bloweth where it listeth, so does the Spirit of God work wherever he pleases. I do not think that we can always account for the great success of one preacher and the non-success of another by anything that we can see. We have to fall back upon the sovereignty of God, and say, "God wills it, and therefore it is." He will have us know that sovereignty is his divine prerogative. He hath the key of David; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth. If he wills it, the rain shall descend steadily to make fat the fields; but if he wills it, he can restrain the dews of heaven until the most fertile church shall become barren as the mountains of Gilboa. He exercises his power, not according to our will, but according to his own will; we must never forget that.

At the same time, what course should we take in order to secure his presence? I reply, first, that *we had better go on with our work for him*. If we want Christ to bless us, and we are doing work for him, we had better keep on steadily doing it. These disciples of his had been fishing all night. Perhaps, if they had not fished at night, Christ would not have given them fish in the day time. He does not often come to bless idlers; he acts sovereignly, as I have

said, but he generally gives his blessing to those churches that do the most for him. I have always found that an earnest gospel ministry and a prayerful united church will have God's blessing when others will not have it. Go on, Sunday-school teachers; go on, tract-distributors; go on, evangelists; go on, all of you who are labouring for Christ, keep each one to his own service; and even if it has been night with you, and you have taken nothing, still keep on at your toil. Probably the best way to bring the Master to you is to labour for him with all your might.

Sometimes, however, *it will be necessary for us to wash or mend our nets*. In the miracle recorded by Luke, we find that the fishermen, after toiling all night, were washing their nets; and either on that occasion, or on a similar one, some of them were mending their nets. Every church needs to do that, and every church-member, every Christian worker needs to do that. The preacher will do well to adopt another style, to study more diligently, and to make himself more proficient in the knowledge of the Word. Sunday-school teachers must more carefully study the lessons for their classes, and go to their scholars better prepared for their work. Your nets will often need washing and mending if you are to be fishers of men; and all of you will be more likely to get the Master's blessing if you pay more attention to the means you are using for doing good in his service. Christ does not want slovenly work, nor is he likely to bless those who think that any kind of service will do for him. I have heard of a preacher, who thought that whatever came first into his head was good enough for his people. On one occasion, he informed one of his officers, at the end of his sermon, that he had never thought of it before he entered the pulpit; and the good elder replied, "I thought so while listening to you. I thought that, if you had considered it beforehand, you would never have said what you did." We all need to wash and mend our nets;—I mean, that we all need to do Christ's work in the best possible way; and that is the way in which we are most likely to be privileged with his presence.

On that first occasion, the fishermen had been listening to Christ's words, for they had, at his request, turned their boat into a pulpit, in which he sat down, and taught the people who stood on the shore. Was there any connection between that incident and the great haul of fish? I think there was, and that, if they had not granted Christ's request, and listened to his sermon, he would not have blessed them with that multitude of fish. At all events, I know that a worker will always be all the better for waiting a while, and sitting as a learner at Christ's feet,—reading the Word for himself, or listening to the truth as it is preached by some God-sent minister. The message may strike a key-note in your heart, which shall so influence your whole life that, henceforth, you shall be in a different condition, and more likely to be blessed of the Most High.

Do you ask, "What is there that will bring Christ to a church, and keep him there?" I reply, in a word, *prayer*. There is no force in nature that is equal to the power of prayer. The law of gravitation holds the planets in their orbits, and links the sun to all the

spheres that circle round him; but prayer has ere now made gravitation itself cease to exert its energy. "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon," said Joshua,—who had first spoken to the Lord about the matter,—“and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon;” and sun and moon stood still. We speak that which, to many nowadays, only causes ridicule; but, to our minds, it seems ridiculous to doubt that God hearkeneth unto the voice of men. When men are made in the image of God,—twice-made, and so made his children,—surely their believing prayers shall move the heart of their heavenly Father. You remember what Christ said to his disciples, in his sermon on the mount: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” Of course, he will listen to the voices of those whom he so dearly loves. You know, beloved, that there is power in prayer. When believers meet together, and unitedly cry, “Lord, revive thy work; put more power into the ministry; make the hearts of thy people to be more full of love and zeal; save the ungodly; arouse the unconcerned;” it will be done. It is not with us merely a matter of hope, that earnest prayer will bring blessing to the church and to the world; it is a matter of fact, it must be so. The laws of nature may be suspended, but laws that appertain to God's own character for truth and faithfulness cannot be suspended. He would not be God if he did not answer prayer; his own promises bind him to do so. O ye that doubt him, try him! If any of you question the power of prayer, see what has already been done by it. As for you who are the servants of the living God, and who have access to his mercy-seat, you have but to ask and to receive, you have but to seek and to find, you have but to knock and the door shall be opened to you. Brethren and sisters in Christ, join one another in praying Christ to come into our midst; do pray for a blessing, pray mightily for it, and rest not day nor night till that blessing comes.

We must, however, add to prayer *the waiting for the blessing that we seek*. After Christ had ascended to heaven, his disciples went to an upper room, and waited there till the Holy Spirit was given to them on the day of Pentecost. They did not sit there thinking that perhaps the promised blessing might come, or might not come, but there they waited till they heard the “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind,” and the “cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them.” So let us come together in our assemblies expecting the blessing which the Lord has promised, for the blessing will certainly come if we believingly expect it. “Open thy mouth wide,” says God, “and I will fill it.” Oh, for the capacity to believe God; for, assuredly, God will never dishonour our faith.

And then, to our expectation, we must add *the opening of our own hearts to receive the blessing*. We want the Saviour to bless us, and he says, “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.” He is ready to bless you, beloved; are you ready to be blessed by him? O ye that love him.

fling wide the doors of your hearts, and ask him to come in! He has bought you with his heart's blood; will you not give him your heart's best love? He is himself your Beloved, your Husband, your All-in-all; so treat him not as a stranger. Let him not stand and knock any longer, but open wide the door, and bid him come in. Is it your will, dear brethren and sisters, to receive him? Do you really want him? Do you long for more of him? You will have to be very prayerful and very careful if he does come to you, for he is a jealous lover; and when he dwells in the heart, he looks with severe eyes upon anything contrary to his will that is done by his own dear ones, just as a king will tolerate in a stranger what he would not endure from a courtier. I am afraid we sometimes pray for sanctification, and do not really wish for it; and I am also afraid that we sometimes ask for a great blessing, and do not really wish for it. Do you believe that Christ can come to us, and bless us? Are you living as if you expected him to come to you? If so, when he comes, you will be overawed by the majesty of his presence, and you will say, with John, "It is the Lord." As we hear of blessing in the Sunday-school, we shall say, "It is the Lord." As we hear of the work of grace in the Bible-classes, we shall say, "It is the Lord." And at every church meeting, as we hear the stories of those who have been brought to believe in Jesus, we shall say, "'It is the Lord,' for no one else could have wrought so blessed a work in our midst."

I wish I knew how to put this subject before you so that every believing heart would be affected by it to the highest possible degree, but I do not; and therefore, as we are coming to the communion table, I will try to use the sacred feast to stir up you who are serving Christ to pray for more of his presence. You have here before you the memorials of his love to you. He gave his body to be broken for you, his heart to be pierced for you. Has Christ done all this for you, and will you not do much for him? You are saved; your sins are covered, you are his dear child; then will you not spend and be spent for him? If the Master were to come and stand here to-night instead of me, and show you his pierced hands and feet, and then were to call you, his own people, up, one by one, and put such questions as these to you, (I will give you the questions directly,) I wonder how you would feel. You would come up these stairs dazzled with his beauty and overwhelmed with his love, as he gazed upon you; and then he would say to each one of you, "My blood-bought one, what art thou doing for me? Art thou feeding my sheep? Art thou feeding my lambs?" I think I see you blush, and hear you reply, "My dear Master, I have been with some of thy lambs this afternoon." "But did you really feed them?" "I spent a happy hour with them." "Well but did you feed them?" "I endeavoured to do so, good Master, but I am ashamed to say that I did not feed them as I should have done." "But did you feed them as *my* lambs, and as I would have fed them? Did you love them? Did you speak affectionately to them? Did you tell them about me? Did you try to bring them to me? Did you pray over them? Did you send them away feeling that

their teacher longed that they should all know the Saviour?" Well, the Master is not here in bodily presence, and I will not put such questions to you; but I should like you to put them to yourselves, and to think that you hear the Master putting them to you, even as of old he said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" I think I hear him call up some brother, and say to him, "Thou who art redeemed by my precious blood, what hast thou done for me?" I think I see you blush as he says to you again, "What hast thou done for me?" At last you say, "I am a member of the church." "But what hast thou done for me?" "I sometimes put something into the offering-box." "But what hast thou done for me?" He shows his hands, lays bare his side, and says, "I suffered this for thee; what hast thou done for me?" I fear that there are some members of this church who would not like to be put to such a test as that; and, for my own part, I would desire to say to the Master, "Give me a few more years in which to serve thee better, and give me more grace that I may be more diligent in the service that thou hast allotted to me." And I pray you, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, if you feel that you must present the same prayer, make this your solemn resolution that, by his Spirit's help, you will lay yourselves out, body, soul, and spirit, for his dear sake.

But, alas! there are some of you who do not love him at all,—some of you to whom the Christ of God is quite a stranger. Oh, that your hearts were changed! For, remember that he will soon come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him; and you, who will not now kiss the silver sceptre of mercy that he holds out to you in the preaching of the gospel, must then feel the weight of that iron rod of justice with which he will break the ungodly, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessels. Be wise, therefore, and trust the Saviour now. The Lord grant that you may do so, and then, having trusted him for yourself, may you serve him with all your heart and soul as long as you live on this earth, and then go to join that great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, for ever ascribing their salvation to his grace!

Have you never heard the story of the poor man, in deep distress of mind, who one night dreamed a dream? He found himself outside the gates of heaven, and he sat down and wept, for he longed to enter. Presently he heard sweet music, and saw a company of people approaching with palms in their hands. He asked who they were, and one of them said that they were the noble army of martyrs coming to take their thrones. Then he wept much, and said, "I cannot enter with you." While he sat mourning, he heard the trumpet sound again, and another company came along singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." He said to them, "Who are ye?" They replied, "We are the goodly fellowship of the prophets and apostles;" and he wept again, for he said, "I cannot enter with you." Presently another company came, chanting the praises of the grace of God, and he said, "Who

are ye?" They answered, "We are the preachers of the Word, and the deacons and elders of the church." Again he said, "I cannot enter with you." He sat down and wept till, by-and-by, he saw a larger company coming, marching like an exceeding great army, and singing sweetly as they came. In the very front rank was the woman that was a sinner, with her rich voice leading the song; and near her was the thief who, at the last, had prayed, "Lord, remember me." They came along right jubilantly, and he asked them, "Who are ye?" And they made answer, "We are the company of great sinners, saved by great mercy." At once he said, "I can go in with you;" and, brothers and sisters, that is the company to which you and I belong, and when we enter heaven, they will welcome us just as heartily as they did the martyrs, and the prophets, and the apostles. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and when sinners repent, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, and joy in the heart of God himself because they have sought his pardoning mercy. If any of you are not saved, it is not because there is any lack of mercy in the heart of God. If you perish, it is not for want of an open door set before you; so come in while you may.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XXI.

Verse 1. After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

May every one of you, my fellow-disciples, realize that Jesus is showing himself to you! He is only to be seen in his own light; he must show himself to us, or else we shall never see him.

2. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

He had told them to go into Galilee, and given them the promise, "There shall ye see me." So now they were by the Galilean lake; they were keeping their tryst with Christ, and as he always keeps his tryst with his people, he was there to meet them, as he had promised.

3. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.

Their Master had told them to wait, but they could not wait. Surely, when they were in Galilee by his command, they might have trusted him to supply their needs; but their faith was slack, so Peter said, "I go a fishing," and the others were much of the same mind; waiting had become weary work, as it often does with our faint hearts, so they said, "We also go with thee."

3. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

As is generally the case with us in our will-work and will-worship. When we are not guided of God, but go entirely according to our own mind and will, it will be thus with us also. Men attempt some business speculation without asking guidance of God, and they make a miserable failure of it, so that it might be written of them as of the disciples, "That night they caught nothing."

4. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

They were thinking of fishing, so they saw boats, and nets, and the sea ; if they had been thinking of Jesus, they would have looked for him, and when he came, they would have known him.

5. *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat ?*

"Have ye anything to eat ?"

5. *They answered him, No.*

But that was not his fault.

6. *And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*

He testified his presence by crowning their exertions with his blessing, and soon they had a great catch of great fishes,—a great contrast to their night of fruitless toil.

7, 8. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.*

We often come very slowly to Christ because we will drag that net with fishes ; we have such a deal of care, anxiety, and trouble, when we need not have any at all, and so we come slowly, "dragging the net with fishes."

9. *As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.*

Why did they want to go fishing on their own account ? Christ had all that they needed ready for them ; there was the fire, and there were the fish cooking on it ready for their breakfast. It was the Lord Jesus Christ's business to provide for them, and he did so.

10, 11. *Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three : and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.*

And there lay those hundred and fifty and three big fishes on the beach. Christ had no need of them, but perhaps he condescended to use some of them for that morning meal, as he said to Peter, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught."

12. *Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine.**

Or, "Come and break your fast after your long night's toil." How they must have opened their eyes to see the fish ready cooked for them to eat !

12. *And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou ? knowing that it was the Lord.*

"It was the Lord,"—"the Lord" who had asked them if they had any food, "the Lord" who had filled the net which had previously been empty, "the Lord" who had given them his own fish from his own fire, that they might have breakfast with him. O good Master, if we have been toiling all the week, and have caught nothing, call us now to come and eat of that which thou hast thyself prepared !

13—15. *Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these ?*

"More than this lot of fish, these boats, these nets ? You gave them all up for me once, but now you have taken to them again ; do you really love me better than your fishing and your fish ?"

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,072, "Breakfast with Jesus."

15. *He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.**

“Do not go after fish any more, but attend to my business: ‘feed my lambs.’ The proof of your greater love to me than to all worldly things was found in your doing of the work which I have committed to your charge.”

16. *He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? † He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

“Quit the sea; I am giving you no more business there: come now, and be a pastor to my blood-bought sheep.”

17. *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. ‡*

Thrice he had denied his Lord, so thrice he must be questioned concerning his love to the Lord whom he said he did not even know, and then for the third time he was re-commissioned by his Lord:—

17—19. *Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

Peter's death was to glorify God, so he might well be content, painful though it was to be.

20, 21. *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved § following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?*

Our Lord never answered such a foolish, inquisitive question as this, and therefore—

22. *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*

That is how Christ would answer any similar questions that we might put to him. We need not concern ourselves so much about what is to happen to others until we have made our own calling and election sure. “What is that to thee? follow thou me.”

23. *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*

This is only one of many instances in which Christ's words have been twisted and made to mean something quite different from what he intended.

24, 25. *This is the disciple which testified of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,684, “Feed My Lambs: A Sabbath-school Sermon.”

† See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 117, “Lovest thou Me?” and *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,281, with the same title.

‡ See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,669, “Comfort from Christ's Omniscience.”

§ See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,539, “The Disciple whom Jesus Loved.”