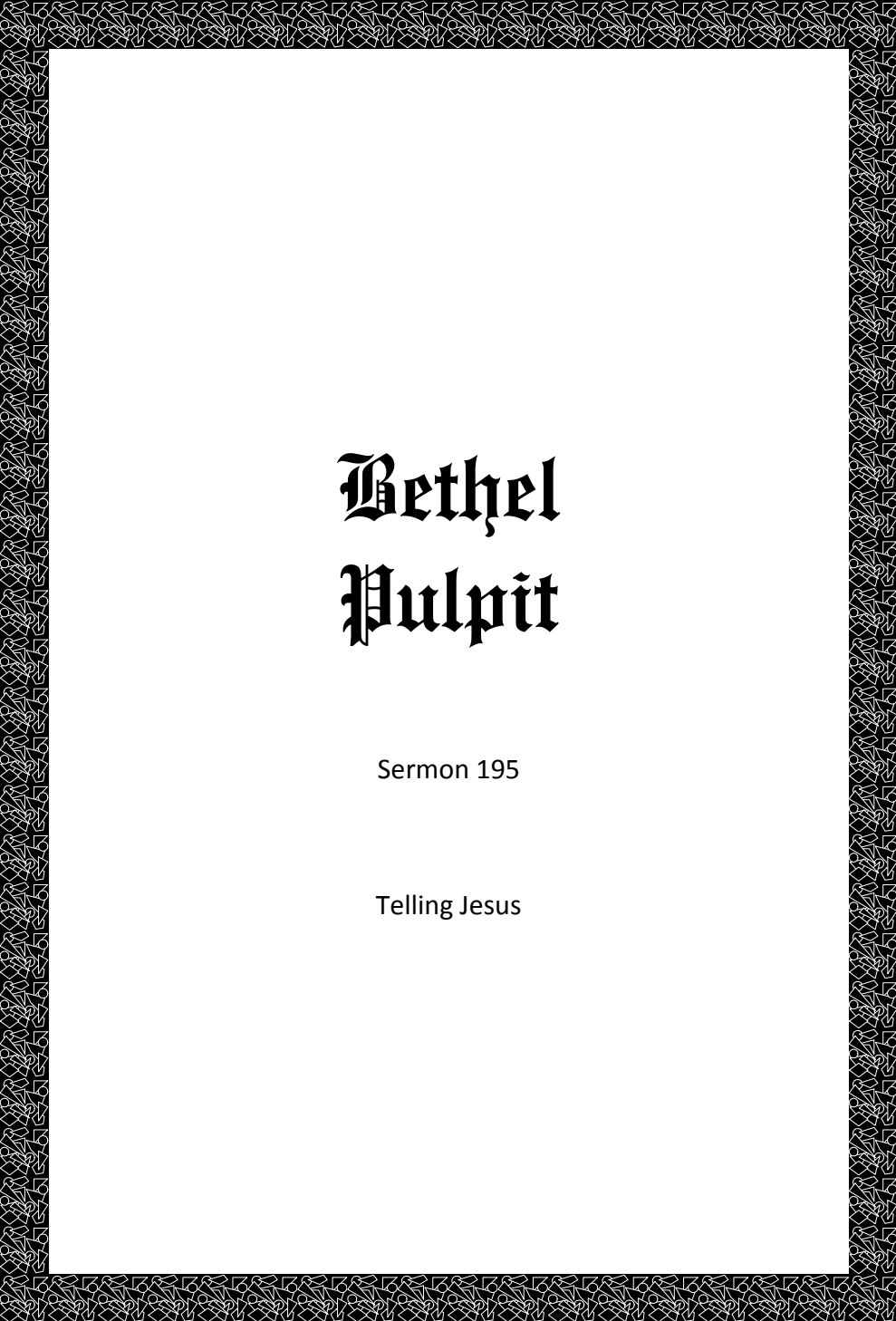




# Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 195

Telling Jesus

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,  
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,  
on Lord's day evening, 29th July, 2001**

**Text:** *"And his disciples" – that is, John's disciples – "went and told Jesus." The whole verse reads: "And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus" (Matthew 14. 12).*

There is a most beautiful, sacred, solemn simplicity here. These terrible happenings, these gruesome happenings, the murder of John the Baptist; but the beautiful simplicity, John's disciples lovingly took the body, buried it, and then went and told Jesus. Of course, the wonderful thing with all verses like this is that you and I are permitted to do the same. We are permitted with all our sin and all our faults and all our failures to go to the holy Jesus and tell Him our concerns. Eminent people are not usually very open and free to everyone. Sometimes they grant interviews, but often there has to be a long waiting period, and sometimes they make a heavy charge for their advice. O but when you think who the Lord Jesus is, true, almighty God, the Son of God from all eternity, His greatness, His grandeur, His glory, once crucified, once a Man of sorrows, now for ever exalted in heaven, yet poor, wretched, unworthy sinners permitted, more than permitted, invited, more than invited, welcome to go in the sweet simplicity of faith and to tell Jesus.

And really that is what prayer is, isn't it? When we can go by faith with our various concerns and our burdens, whatever they are, whatever they are not, and we can go and tell Jesus. And the great point is this: that He listens. "He kindly listens while they tell the bitter pangs they feel within." And good John Newton says,

"With Him sweet converse I maintain;  
Great as He is, I dare be free;  
I tell Him all my grief and pain,  
And He reveals His love to me."

Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if we were led more and more in this pathway, to be sweetly enabled by the leading of the Spirit of God, by faith to go just as we are with all our burdens and with all our concerns and to tell Jesus?

"His disciples ... went and told Jesus." Now beloved friends, John's disciples were heartbroken with sorrow. They had just lost their

beloved master, and they had lost him in such strange circumstances, such squalid circumstances. The awfulness of it! You think, John the Baptist, this godly, able, faithful minister. Do not forget, he was only in his early thirties. Sometimes we think of John as an aged man. He was only a young man. He was thrown into prison. Why? Because he was faithful to the truth. He would not deviate, and so he was thrown into prison. And then there was a dance, a wicked dance, and there is a wicked, ungodly king, and he is pleased with this dance, and he promises this ungodly girl she can have anything, even to the half of his kingdom. She asks for the head of John the Baptist; and Herod was sorry, but he said he could not break his promise. You watch! If you are ever caught in a dreadful mistake like Herod, do not say, I must do it because I have promised. Find, pray, your way out of it.

I feel constrained, though I had not intended, to say a few things about Herod and John the Baptist. We are told that Herod “did many things, and heard him gladly.” Now he had a special liking for John the Baptist. He found something attractive in John. He loved listening to his preaching, and he “did many things, and heard him gladly.” But at last he had him beheaded. William Huntington once said it had been a thousand times better if Herod had heard John the Baptist *sadly*, and found *he could not do anything at all!*

I do not know if you have ever noticed this. Herod after this had a great desire to see the Lord Jesus, and at last he did see the Lord Jesus and he asked Him many questions. “But He answered him nothing.” The Lord Jesus so despised Herod, He so despised him for what he had done, that He answered him not a word. Here was Herod in his gorgeous robes on his throne, and he was asking the Lord Jesus all these questions, and the Lord Jesus never spoke one word to him. In the silence of Jesus the voice of John the Baptist was crying from the grave in Herod’s conscience.

Herod perished in his sins. There is a solemn thing here. Herod went a long way. He was interested; he liked listening to the preaching, but he was never blessed with repentance and faith. When the time came that he had to make that solemn choice between Christ and the world, he chose the world and he perished in his sin. Tell me, have you ever heard a good word spoken about Herod? But what did the eternal Son of God say of John the Baptist? “Among them that are born of women there hath not

risen a greater than John the Baptist.” Well, those few things just by way of an aside concerning this wicked man, Herod.

Now here were John the Baptist’s disciples, and their hearts were full of sorrow at these terrible things that had taken place, and what did they do? In their sorrow they went to the only place where they could go. There was not anywhere else. They sought the Lord Jesus out, and they told Him all. They unburdened their hearts to Him. They unbosomed their hearts to Him. They told Him all. Now there is a pattern here for when those times of sorrow come. You have a sad heart. When you have a sad heart, well, you cannot settle. You have a sad heart; sometimes you are overcome with it. You have a sad heart; you hardly know what to do. Now this is it: in your trouble, in your sorrow, as you are enabled go and tell Jesus and lay your burden at His feet and to leave it with the Him. “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” And, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.”

“His disciples ... went and told Jesus.” They went in all their trouble; they went in all their sorrow. Now the Word of God does not tell us what the Lord Jesus said to them. One thing we do know, that He will never, never break the bruised reed and He will never, never quench the smoking flax. So may you be able to go with all your sorrow and may you be able to lay it at the Saviour’s feet, and may you be able to tell Him all, to open your heart, open your mouth, to hold nothing back, to tell Him how you feel. He was once “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He understands your sorrow. I think it was one of the old divines who said that we do not read anything that the Lord Jesus said to John’s sorrowing disciples, but He who wept at Lazarus’ grave, surely, surely, wept at the death of John the Baptist. O that loving, tender, sympathising heart! It is a wonderful word, “Jesus wept.” If sometimes you know that experience, perhaps at an open grave to mingle your tears with the tears of the Lord Jesus.

“His disciples ... went and told Jesus.” Now we do not read that they asked for anything, because what could they ask for? There are times in our lives when we feel we must go to the Lord Jesus, when we feel we must pray to Him, but we do not really know what to ask for. I mean here, they could not ask for John the Baptist back. He was dead. He was buried. And perhaps a word like this especially touches on a bereavement. Now there are quite a lot of you here, over the years you have known what sore

bereavement is, and perhaps you hardly know how to pray. You miss your loved ones so much, but you cannot ask for them back. They are in the grave. They are buried. At times like this, just to be able to go in the sweet simplicity of faith and tell Jesus. He knows. You are not telling Him anything He does not know, but He likes His children to go and tell Him. That loving mother, when the tiny child comes running and starts speaking, she is in such trouble, such a state, and tells her mother so many things: and the mother knows it all, but she lets her go on. She loves to hear that little one pouring out her heart. That is it: "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us." "His disciples ... went and told Jesus." In all their sorrow, in all their trouble, in their bereavement, they went and told Jesus. We do not read they asked for anything. What could they ask for? But they went and told Jesus.

One thing that does stand out a little bit in the life of John the Baptist is that at times his disciples seemed to have a wrong spirit. They had such a ferocious loyalty to their master, and it seems in places they were almost a little bit jealous of the dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Once they said, Master, He whom thou baptized, all men follow after Him. In other words, We are sorry, John, we are disappointed. We are your loyal servants, and they are all leaving you and going after the Lord Jesus. What did John say? "This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." What a spirit that! John had it. His disciples took a long time, but now in this deep sorrow, this sore bereavement, the loss of their master, John the Baptist, they were driven to Christ. They had nowhere else to go. They were driven to Christ. "He bids affliction drive us home, to anchor on His grace." You look back in your life. There has been a sorrow. It has driven you closer. There has been a sorrow, it has driven you to the Lord Jesus. There has been a sorrow, perhaps even an idol taken away, and it must be "none but Jesus." "And his disciples came ... and told Jesus." Now in all their sorrow and sadness and bereavement, they went in simplicity and told Him all. They had nowhere else to go, but it worked for their good. It brought them to cling and cleave to the Saviour. It seems that from this day they became the immediate followers of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"His disciples came ... and told Jesus." Now there was another thing with them as well as the bitter sorrow that they felt, and that was the perplexity. Why had the Lord Jesus Christ allowed this? Why did He

allow such a faithful servant (and He had never had a more faithful servant), why did He allow him to be cast into prison, and cast into prison for being so faithful to the truth? Now why? why? John's disciples must have felt. Why did the Lord permit this, and then why did the Lord not set him free? The Lord Jesus was going about raising the dead, healing the sick, performing miracles, and His beloved servant John was languishing in the prison so that he sank as low as this: "Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another?" One day, John hears his prison doors being opened. Is this the long-awaited deliverance? It is the executioner's sword. It is martyrdom.

It was not just sorrow; it *was* deep, bitter sorrow; it was real grief. O but the perplexity! They could not understand the dealings of the Lord Jesus. Did He *really* love John the Baptist? Why did He allow this? Why was this permitted? Now at times, these thoughts will arise in greater or lesser measure with all of you. Why? As Rebekah cried, "If it be so, why am I thus?" Now why, why does the Lord deal with me like this? Why does He deal with His servants like this? Why does He deal with His people like this? You try to work it out, you try to solve it, and you try to reason it. Beloved friends, when you have these perplexing thoughts there is only one remedy, only one safe retreat, and that is to speed your way to the throne of grace, to the mercyseat, to Jesus Himself, and to tell Him all. Do not be afraid to tell Him all. Tell Him your perplexity. Tell Him what you feel. Tell Him your grief. Tell Him you do not understand. "He kindly listens while we tell the bitter pangs we feel within."

"His disciples came ... and told Jesus." You see the sorrow, and then the perplexity, and of course there was another thing. They did not know what to do. For two or three years they had been with John the Baptist. They had been his disciples. They had been following him. They had gone with him where he went. Now he had been cast into prison, and they waited for his deliverance, but now it is all final. No longer can they be John's disciples. John is dead. John is buried. Now what can they do? Well, sometimes you will not just be sad, and you will not just be perplexed concerning the Lord's dealings. Why this? Why that? But you will be concerned what to do. Perhaps a door is being closed. This door for John's disciples was closed for ever. What should they do? So they "went and told Jesus." And it seems clear that Jesus told them what to do, that from henceforth they became *His* disciples. So if you do not know

what to do, then the only thing is to speed your way to the Saviour and like Saul of Tarsus to say, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

“His disciples came,” these sorrowing disciples, these bewildered disciples, these perplexed disciples, they came, “and told Jesus.” Now then, as it concerns you and me, have you got anything to tell Jesus? That is what real prayer is. We get so perplexed in our religion. “I fear, lest ... as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” What is the simplicity which is in Christ? A sinner going like a little child to his father, going to the Lord Jesus and telling Him everything. Well, have you got anything to tell the Lord Jesus concerning your sins and your soul and eternity? Perhaps you are not sure whether you are right. Can you tell the Lord Jesus that? How many of the little ones in Zion have gone and told the Lord Jesus this: I do not know whether I am right. If I am right, show me I am right and keep me right, and if I am not right, do make me right. This will not displease the Saviour. He loves those little ones venturing on Him. What about those sins?

“Come just as thou art, with thy woe,  
Fall down at the feet of the Lamb,  
He will not, He cannot say, Go,  
But surely will take out thy stain.  
A fountain is opened for sin,  
And thousands its virtues have proved;  
He'll take thee, and plunge thee therein,  
And wash thee from filth in His blood.”

Now go like John's disciples with all your sin and tell Jesus all. And what about the perplexities you have in your life, and what about these temptations, and what about your hard heart, and what about your unbelief? Well, go on mercy's ground. Go to Jesus and tell Him all. Confess your sin. Plead His precious blood. Do not dictate to Him. Going and telling Jesus does not mean dictating to Him. It does not mean telling Him what to do and the best way to do it. That is not godly humility. But tell Him just how you feel, and how you do not feel, and how you would like to feel, and ask for His mercy, His forgiveness, cleansing in His precious blood.

Are some of you sad as you realise that one day you must die, and then the judgment, and then eternity, and, “How wilt thou do in the

swelling of Jordan?” Like John’s disciples, go and tell Jesus. John’s disciples had come face to face with death. It must not have been a very pleasant business, taking this headless body to bury it. It must not have been a very pleasant business after this murder had taken place. Perhaps they thought that soon they would be losing their own heads to Herod. But they “went and told Jesus.”

Well, have you got anything to tell Jesus? What about things in your life? What about things in your family? What about things in your circumstances? What about disappointments? What about the trouble you are in? May you be enabled to go by faith and tell Jesus in humble dependence, in sweet confidence, on the ground of His promise, knowing that He waits to be gracious. “Thou callest burdened souls to Thee and such, O Lord, am I.” Go and fall down at His gracious feet and like John’s disciples tell Him all. And have you got things you do not understand? And have you got perplexities? And have you got things that are too hard for you?

“Thou art coming to a King;  
Large petitions with thee bring;  
For His grace and power are such,  
None can ever ask too much.”

They were going to a loving, kind, sympathising Jesus, but they were going to the One who was the Creator of heaven and earth. They were going to the One who is true Almighty God. O may we venture on the Lord Jesus with believing views of who He is, a real Man, but true Almighty God. And to go to Him in a way that John’s disciples never could go: looking back to Calvary and remembering what He has done in dying that sinners might live. Do not forget this same Jesus, this identical Jesus to whom John’s disciples went, is now risen, exalted, glorified, crowned with glory and honour.

O but what is it you have got, the things that perplex you, the things you do not understand, the things you could not go and tell anyone else? He will not be offended. He will not be shocked. He will not refuse to listen. He will not turn you away. “A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.” O may there be a few of you going home tonight and telling Jesus your wants and your woes, your sorrows, your sins, your trials, your

perplexities, and knowing that He listens, knowing that He understands, knowing that He will appear.

“His disciples came ... and told Jesus.” In the New Testament, we have so many great and gracious and glorious offices and relationships of the Lord Jesus Christ: the Saviour, the Good Shepherd, you can think of so many of them. But never forget this: the Friend of sinners. O the condescension of it, that this great and glorious Saviour condescends to be the Friend of sinners! “Jesus Christ, the sinner’s Friend, loves His people to the end.” Now what is a friend, if not one to whom you can go when you are sad, when your heart is downcast, when you are in trouble, and there tell that friend everything and know he will be willing to listen, he will not spurn you, he will not talk about you behind your back, he will not despise you? You can tell your friend everything. They used to say that a real friend is a person who knows the worst about you and loves you just as much. Well, if that is a human friend, what of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? “This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” O it is a wonderful name, isn’t it, the dear Friend of Sinners? And that loving welcome and that kind consideration and that gracious help. The Friend of sinners. That is just what John’s disciples found Him to be. They had lost their master and friend, and now they found another Master and Friend, but in Him there was something they never found in John the Baptist, and that was a dear, almighty Saviour. O to go and tell Him all! “His disciples came ... and told Jesus.” To be able to go in confession, in gratitude, in prayer, in every time of need, and there to tell Him everything.

“His disciples came ... and told Jesus.” Now what the Lord Jesus said, we are not told. All that we are told is, “When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart.” You say, That does not seem the best of welcomes. Now listen. If you compare scripture with scripture and read the other account of this in Mark 6, there are two things, and the first is this: it seems that from this moment, John the Baptist’s disciples were identified with the disciples of the Lord Jesus. Now the second thing (if that is so, and it seems very clear), immediately Jesus said to His own disciples (and we believe that now these included John the Baptist’s disciples), “Come ye yourselves apart ... and rest a while.” Well, John’s sorrowing, perplexed disciples could never have heard a sweeter word than that. That is what they needed: rest. They were weary. They were perplexed. They were sad. They were exhausted. “Come ye yourselves apart ... and rest a while.” He took them into a quiet place, into

the desert, but He was there with them, and there He spoke to them, there He ministered to them.

So the Lord speaks to His tried, perplexed, sorrowing people now, those who have of necessity to come and tell Him all. He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He says, “Come ye yourselves apart” – apart from the world, apart from all these things that have been happening, apart from your trials, sorrows and perplexities – “and rest a while.” That is to find rest in the Saviour’s presence. That is to find rest in being with Him. That is to find rest in going after Him, in going to Him. That is to find Him as your resting place, your only resting place, for, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” And some of you have to say, “O that I now the rest might know, believe and enter in!” O as you venture tonight, as you go to the dear Saviour, as you are enabled to pour out your heart, as you tell Him all, as you leave your burden there, may you hear Him say, “Come unto Me.” May you hear Him say, “Come ye apart.” May you find rest in His presence, rest in His love. For He still “welcomes the weary to come and be blessed with ease from their burdens, in Jesus to rest.”

May many of us in this congregation in all our concerns be sweetly helped, sweetly enabled to go to the feet of the Lord Jesus and tell Him all, and then to know something of His love and mercy, His gracious presence, and there to find that sweet peace and joy and rest in believing.