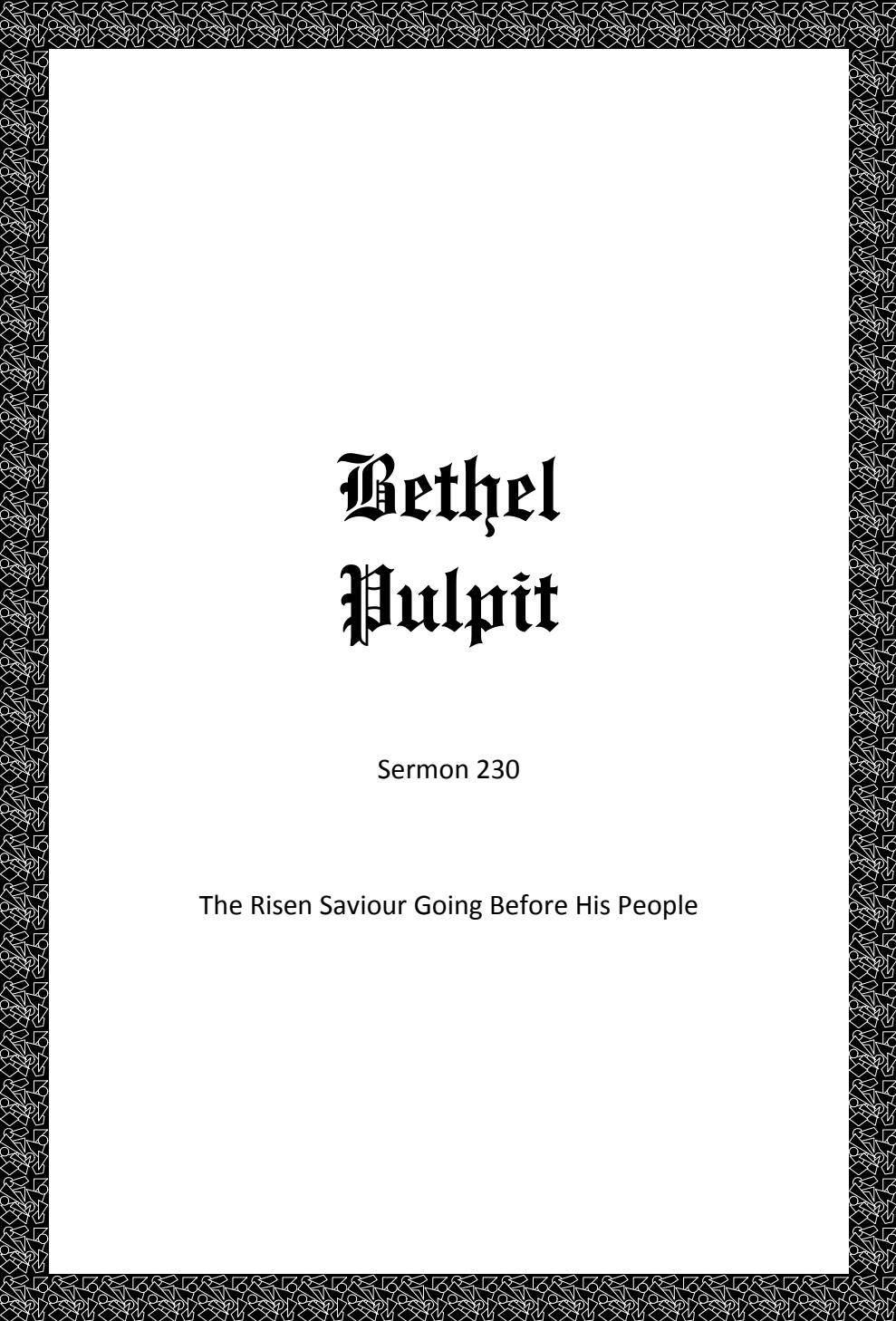




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 230

The Risen Saviour Going Before His People

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 9th May, 2004**

Text: *"Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you" (Matthew 28. 7).*

I cannot think of any more blessed subject than this: the risen Saviour going before His people. And the wonderful mercy is that He still *does*, and that He will do right down to the end of time. Because we do not limit this word just to these godly women and then the immediate disciples of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It belongs to all His beloved people right down to the end of time.

"Behold, He goeth before you." I will not say much about the context. The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was risen victorious from the dead, having taken the sting from death, the victory from the grave. These words that I have read are part of that wonderful message of the angels to these godly women who had come early to the sepulchre, the announcement, the glorious announcement of the resurrection: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you."

Now beloved friends, when we contemplate these sacred truths, there are really two aspects of them, two sides. One is this glorious fact that the Lord Jesus, though He died, yet He rose again – the fact of it, and all that this fact signifies. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead." It was the Father's seal, the open evidence that the one sacrifice for sin had been accepted. It was the pledge of His people's resurrection in the last great day. Now this glorious fact – "The Lord is risen indeed" – and all that it means, all that it signifies. But it does not end there. The other side of it is this: not just the fact of the resurrection, but a living Saviour, the Saviour who lives no more to die, the Saviour who says to all His people, "Because I live, ye shall live also." In that beautiful word that the Lord Jesus Himself spoke in John 11 we have both sides. He says, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life." The Resurrection – the fact: He was going to rise from the dead. The Life – a

living Saviour. “I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

Have you ever noticed that in the Acts of the Apostles the great point in the preaching was the resurrection? Of course Paul, Peter, the others preached the whole counsel of God; they preached all the doctrines of the gospel. But it seems this is the point that they dwelt on more than any other: the resurrection of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from the dead.

So here, then, we have the announcement of the fact, the glorious fact: the Lord is risen. But then we have this: a living Saviour. “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” You see the love and the mercy and the kindness in this announcement. These godly women did not know what was going to happen; they did not know what they were going to do. The disciples did not know what was going to happen, what they were going to do. Peter said, “I go a fishing.” He thought the only thing was go to back to his old trade. And even now they had received this wonderful announcement that the Lord Jesus who had died was risen again, but still they did not know what they had to do. Now: “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.” It was clear leading, a clear word of direction where they had to go. They had not to remain in Jerusalem. They had to go on that long journey into Galilee. This was the Lord’s will; this was the Lord’s purpose for them, and as they went there in obedience to His word, in obedience to His commandment, they would meet Him there. O this promise of a meeting with a risen Saviour! And when they came there He was going to speak to them; He was going to be with them; He was going to bless them.

Now what a word this was: a word of direction, a word of comfort, a word of consolation! The Lord Himself was going to go there. It was a time of sorrow to them and then suddenly a time of joy; a time of confused thought, a time of fear, a time of crisis, a time of uncertainty, a time when they were wondering what would take place, what would not take place. “Behold” – everything will be right; everything will be well; everything is in the Lord’s hands. “The Saviour lives no more to die.” He has not forgotten you; He is still with you; He is going before you; you are going

to see Him. “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.”

You notice that the angels said, “Behold.” Now I have often noticed this over the years and I believe I have often reminded you of it, that almost always when the Word of God says, “Behold,” there is something important follows. For instance: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel”; “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation”; “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Now you watch for it when you read the Word of God, these *beholds* of Scripture, and almost always something important. You and I waste words. Sometimes we have little expressions that come in and they are meaningless. But you do not get that in the Word of God. If the Word of God says, “Behold,” it is not because the writer is stopping and cannot think what to say next. It is because there is something important. “Every word of God is pure.”

Now, “Behold,” and this is something important, something blessedly important. “Behold, He,” a glorious Person. “Behold, He,” a risen Saviour. Behold Him, and behold in Him all you need, all your salvation and all your desire, all the wisdom you want, all the help you seek, all the leading that you are after. A minister with time, grace and ability, how many sermons could he preach on those two words concerning the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: “Behold Him!” Behold Him in His goings forth from of old, even from everlasting. Behold Him in the bosom of His Father eternally. Behold Him in the covenant of grace standing forth as His people’s Surety, Saviour and everlasting All. Behold Him in His sovereign love to His people. Behold Him as He comes. Behold the Babe of Bethlehem, yet true, almighty God. Behold Him in His sacred life, His baptism, His temptation, His teachings, His miracles. Behold Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the judgment hall, on the cross, in the grave, rising from the grave. Behold Him in heaven, a risen, ascended Saviour, a great and glorious High Priest, almighty to save.

But really it is this as you come to the house of God this morning, some of you with your fears, some in your weakness, some in your deep concerns, some feeling your sin, some concerned about those you love, some concerned about the unknown way. This is the answer, the glorious answer to it all: behold Him. There is a blessed suitability in Him, the

Lord Jesus, to meet all these needs. He is the Pearl of great price. It is not you need one thing for this and something else for that. It is this one great Saviour in all His preciousness and suitability and love, the Pearl of great price. When the merchant “had found one Pearl of great price,” he did not need anything else (Matt. 13. 46). “*Whatever* be your state or case, the Lord Himself be near.” And that will do everything and that will put everything right.

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him; lo, I have told you.” Now then, how are we going to consider Galilee? I think this point I try to make with you continually: what is the mind of the Spirit in the passage? Well, we know what it meant here. It was literal. They had to journey the seventy miles or so to Galilee. What does it mean for you and me? We are not going to journey to Israel. I think in the context and the analogy, seeking the mind of the Spirit, it was this: all the things they were in, all the things that lay before them, the coming days with their fears and anxieties, with their joys and their sorrows. That was what Galilee was going to be – if you will, the unknown way. “Behold, He goeth before you.” Whatever their fears and anxieties, the Lord was going before them. And the wonderful point was this: when they journeyed to Galilee, when they reached Galilee, the Lord Himself would be already there.

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee.” It reminds us of the ark and Noah. When the ark was ready, have you ever noticed God spoke to Noah, and He did not say, All things are ready, Noah; *go* and all your house into the ark? He said, “*Come* thou and all thy house into the ark.” What does that mean? That the Lord was in the ark already waiting for him. “Come thou and all thy house into the ark.” “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee.” He was going to be there already. He was going to be waiting for them. They were going to be favoured with His gracious presence. They were not going to be there alone with all their fears. The Lord Himself was there.

“Behold He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.” Now for many years I have felt this to be a very sacred, blessed truth, the Lord going before His people. Especially it makes us think of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the great Shepherd of the sheep going before them as the eastern shepherd does, not driving them, but going before, leading them into the green pastures, meeting any foe, preparing the way

for them. “Behold, He” – Jesus Himself – “Behold, He goeth before you,” the great Shepherd of the sheep. When you think of the sheep of Christ’s fold, they are weak, foolish, helpless, unworthy. O but the Shepherd going before them! And that is where their safety is, and that is where their security is. “Behold, He goeth before you.”

So we have those beautiful words in John 10: “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him.” So there are times when He puts them forth. Well, He does as He leads them into the pastures, the green pastures and beside the still waters. But sometimes the Lord will put you forth to walk in a way you have never walked before, and sometimes He will put you forth in a way of deep, spiritual exercise, and sometimes He will put you forth to walk in a very dark and difficult way, and sometimes He will put you forth to walk in a way of sorrow. In Psalm 23 He loves His sheep dearly – they are His own sheep – but He puts them forth to walk in the valley of the shadow of death, the place of darkness, the place they dread, the place of fear, the place where they do not want to go. But the Shepherd puts them forth to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. David could say, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” I have to walk there because my Shepherd has put me there. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me.” And do not forget that word *through*. There is the other side. “Yea, though I walk *through*.” Unbelief can see nothing but the valley of the shadow of death; faith lays hold of that word *through*. “Yea, though I walk *through* the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me.”

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you,” says the angel. The certainty of it, the faithfulness of it. “Lo, I have told you.” “Behold, He goeth before you.” “When He putteth forth His own sheep.” Perhaps He is putting some of you forth. Perhaps it is a way you have never walked before. Perhaps it is a way of gracious exercise. Perhaps it is a way of sorrow. Perhaps it is a way of affliction. Perhaps it is a way of fear. Do not forget it is the Lord putting you forth, not accident, not chance. It did not spring out of the dust. “When He putteth forth” – do not forget this – “His own sheep.” That means He loves them. He loved them from all eternity. “His own sheep.” That means He died for them. “His own sheep.” That means He says, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou

art Mine.” “His own sheep.” But He puts them forth. And the good Shepherd knows this: that if He left them where they were, if He did not put them forth, it would be a place of danger, destruction, death. So He puts them forth. O if the Lord is putting you forth, be sure that you follow.

“Behold, He goeth before you.” “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them.” It means this: there is not one step where a sheep of Christ has to tread but the Shepherd has gone before. “He knows what sore temptations mean, for He has felt the same.” “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” “He goeth before.” He has gone before. Think of the wilderness; think of Gethsemane; think of the cross. He has gone before. And the sheep follow Him. So there is not one spot where you have to walk but the Shepherd has gone before, and He has sanctified it for you and no harm can reach you there. “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.” “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him.”

“Behold, He goeth before you.” I could not help going back to this. I have mentioned to you so often recently concerning Joshua. First of all, Moses spoke the promise that the Lord would go with Joshua. Like these disciples here, it was a time of crisis, a time of fear. O but, “Fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go *with* thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” And then two verses after it says, “He it is that doth go *before* thee.” It seems to imply this: that if the Lord goes *before* thee, He goes *with* thee, and if He goes *with* thee, He goes *before* thee. In other words, if the Lord is going before you it is Jehovah Shammah; the Lord is there. If the Lord is going before you, it is His gracious presence; the Lord is there. If the Lord is going before you, it is, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” “The Lord ... He it is that doth go *with* thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” And two verses later: “The Lord, He it is that doth go *before* thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” If a friend was going with you on a journey, he could not both be with you and go before you, but the Lord can. He is with you and He goes before you.

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” And there is that other beautiful word: “I will go

before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.” So the Lord is with you; the Lord is going before you. That does not mean you are going to be exempt from crooked places, but it does mean that the Lord is going to make those crooked places straight, every one of them. And do not forget that Scripture, “Who can make that straight, which He hath made crooked?” If there is a crook in your lot, to use old Thomas Boston’s words, you cannot straighten it, but the Lord can. And He says, “I will.” “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight.”

Perhaps you say, “You are talking a lot about providence this morning.” Do you feel sin in your heart and on your conscience a crooked thing? You cannot make it straight. “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight.” It is the blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son that makes the crooked place straight, that cleanses from all sin. “I will go before thee.” “Lo, I have told you.” It is the certainty of it; it is the faithfulness; it is the wisdom; it is the power. “Lo, I have told you.” “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.” Which I take to mean this: if you have these gates of brass and bars of iron, there is no way. But it means the Lord can make a way where there is no way. When He opens, none can shut, and O when He says, “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it”! “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness” – which otherwise you would never have known, never had – “and hidden riches of secret places.”

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.” “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” You will see Him going with you; you will see Him going before you. You will see His blessed help. You will see His kindness and love. You will see the wonderful fulness of grace and receive from it. You will see His suitability, the riches of His mercy. You will see His ability to answer your prayers. You will see how He can deliver you. You will see His ability to supply your every need. “There shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” What a blessed security for the Lord’s people for the unknown way so that at times they can sing, “The way I walk cannot be wrong, if Jesus be but there”!

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” There is just another aspect of it. There was something else before them. He was not only going to go before them into Galilee, but He was going to go before them into heaven. They were going to see Him ascend into heaven. Now it is not just, “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee,” but, behold, He goeth before you into heaven. This is a different aspect of this sacred truth, but it is a very beautiful, very blessed one, isn’t it? The risen Saviour has ascended into heaven, there for ever to live, there for ever to intercede, an almighty Saviour. But never forget this: He has ascended into heaven as His people’s Forerunner. If you say, “What does a forerunner mean?” Well, it is somebody who goes before. “Behold, He goeth before you.” That means He is your Forerunner. That beautiful scripture: “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” He has gone before. But the great point is He has gone before His people to claim heaven for them and as surely as He has gone before them into heaven, so surely one day all of them will be with Him in heaven where He is. It is a wonderful truth, Christ His people’s Forerunner.

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee.” Behold, He goeth before you beyond Galilee into heaven. “There shall ye see Him.” The old preachers often used to quote this:

“There shall we see His face,
And never, never sin;
There, from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

“There shall ye see Him.” It belongs to all the Lord’s people. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” If you want to bring it right down, in Hebrews 6 you have those two things. You have the glorious Forerunner and you have the hope of the poor, trembling child of God, and the Lord Jesus is the blessed Forerunner of all those whose poor, trembling hope anchors in Him.

“How stands the case, my soul, with thee?
For heaven are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesus’ blood thy only plea?
Is He thy great Forerunner there?”

“Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.”

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” So the Lord Jesus before He suffered kindly said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions.” There are all kinds of descriptions of heaven in the Word of God, but what about this: “My Father’s house”? You know how much I like the writings of Krummacher, but in one of his most beautiful he says that there is a place prepared in heaven. They are waiting for us now and when we arrive we will be so welcome. We shall not be strangers. And he said, “I sometimes think of it like that little child whose birth is expected. There is everything waiting, everything ready, the clothes prepared, the little cradle, everything, and as soon as that baby is born, he is welcome. He is not a stranger; he is at home. And so it will be in heaven.” “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him” – those of you who have seen Him by faith, those of you who have entered into that text: “That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life.” Are you one of those? Are you embraced, are you bound up in this word? Have you seen the Son and is your only hope in Him? “Every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him” shall one day “see the King in His beauty” and “the land that is very far off.” “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” It is like the old hymn:

“This I do find,
We two are so joined” – the union between Christ and
His people – “He can’t be in glory
And leave me behind.”

“Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” – if faith could lay hold of it, if our hope is anchored in the Forerunner, if we know anything of vital union with Him by faith.

“This I do find,
We two are so joined,
He can’t be in glory
And leave me behind.”

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him:
lo, I have told you.”