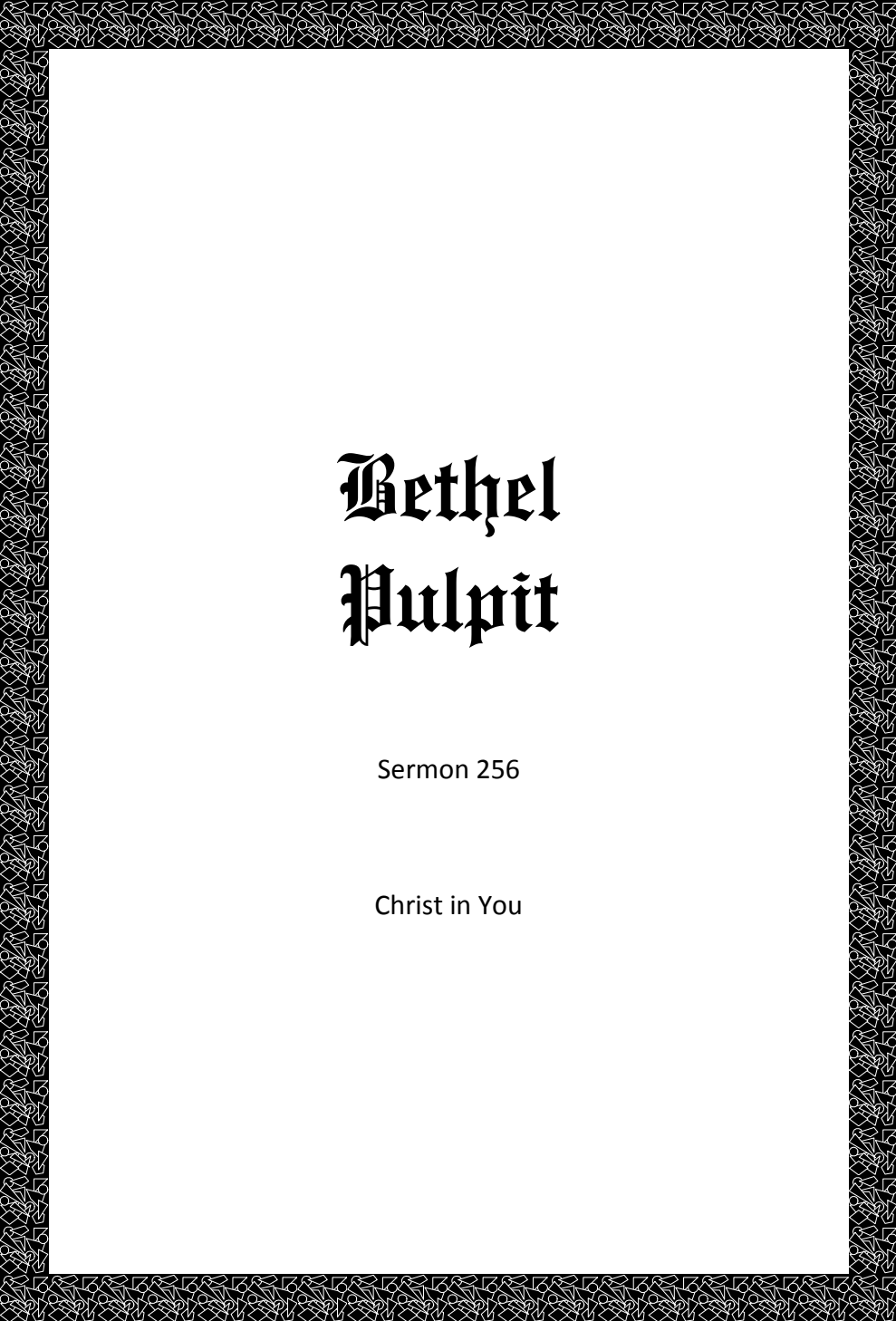




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 256

Christ in You

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 19th December, 2004**

Text: "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Colossians 1. 27).

At present, most of our thoughts are with *Christ in the manger*. O what an amazing thing! What matchless condescension! Christ in the manger, the Son of God from all eternity; Christ in the manger, He who by a word of divine, almighty power spoke all things into being; Christ in the manger. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Christ in the manger. Was there ever such condescension as this? Was there ever such love as this? Was there ever such a miracle as this? Was there ever such a mystery as this? Christ in the manger. Now that is where our thoughts are at this time. I would that all of you might have a right realisation that the Babe of Bethlehem is true, almighty God, and I hope all of you might have a true realisation *why* He lay in that manger, what was the purpose of His coming; and I would that all of you might be concerned about it personally.

So first of all, we have Christ in the manger. But then we have *Christ in His people's place*, making atonement for their sin. That is at Calvary where as the dear Lamb of God He shed His most precious blood that sin might be put away. Christ in the sinners' place. The Son of God came to Bethlehem that He might go to Calvary. You cannot separate the manger from the cross. Of course, the Lord Jesus did not remain in that manger; there was the purpose of His coming. He hath appeared that He might "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." So there at the cross we see Christ in His people's place, their Substitute, their Saviour, their Surety, paying their debt, their everlasting All. In a word it is this, that word which for many years I have loved and some of you too: "Behold a scene of matchless grace, 'Tis Jesus in the sinner's place." We sing of that wonderful love. We see it in the manger. We see it in the cross of Christ.

So Christ in the manger, Christ in His people's place making atonement for their sin. And then *Christ in heaven*. He died; He rose again; He ascended. "Him hath God exalted ... to be a Prince and a Saviour." O to see Christ in heaven this morning!

“Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in heaven,
Set at God’s right hand on high.”

But this same Jesus. This same Jesus who lay in the manger, this same Jesus who lay under divine wrath at Calvary, Christ in heaven, a great and glorious High Priest, an almighty Saviour. “Able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.”

So Christ in the manger, Christ in His people’s place at Calvary, Christ in heaven. And then *Christ in the gospel*. For really if you took Christ out of the gospel, there would not be any gospel left. You cannot say that about anyone else. You take Marxism. If it was proved that Marx never existed, all the teaching would still be there. You can think about all these famous philosophers. If you leave them out, it does not make any difference. But take Christ from the gospel and there is no gospel. “But this is joyful news indeed” – this is the gospel.

“But this is joyful news indeed,
That tells me Jesus came to bleed,
Proclaims salvation full and free,
Obtained on Calvary’s rugged tree.”

Well, it is “the glorious gospel of the blessed God,” and it is full of Christ.

Well then, beloved friends, we have Christ in the manger, Christ in His people’s place at Calvary, Christ in heaven, Christ in the gospel. But what of this: “*Christ in you*”? First of all, this almost comes as a surprise, almost comes as a solemn shock. “Christ in you.” Now do not misunderstand what this means. It is not some kind of peculiar, mystical thing. It is certainly not any bodily presence. It is most certainly not what the ritualists think, believing that the body of Christ is present in the bread at the Lord’s supper, and at the end they sing, “Saviour, blessed Saviour, Thou art in us now.” It does not mean any of those things. Why did I read Ephesians 3? Of course, it does set forth the love and glory of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But especially there is this: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” That is, Christ dwells in the affections of His people; He dwells in their hearts. And it is by faith, because it is faith that welcomes the Saviour to our hearts and it is faith that receives Him. Now as we come to this time of the year, personally, vitally,

experimentally, this is the great point. How true it is that Christ came to Bethlehem; how true it is that Christ lay in the manger; but the vital point for you and me is this: has Christ come to *you* and has Christ come to *me*? Does Christ dwell in our hearts, in our affections? “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” So this is a vital truth. We love to speak of our dear Immanuel. Sweet name, precious name, Immanuel. Now that is God *with* us. That is Christ *with* His people. Now this is Christ dwelling in His people’s hearts by faith, the hope of glory.

Now let us be very clear: by nature Christ does not dwell in our hearts. You can go out into the streets of Luton and you can see crowds of people, and Christ does not dwell in their hearts. They may be thinking about Christmas; they may be buying for Christmas; they may be shopping for Christmas; but Christ does not dwell in their hearts. But leave them. What about you and me? By nature, Christ does not dwell in our hearts. Those of you who know and love and fear the Lord, you go back to those days when Christ did not dwell in your heart. By nature our hearts are hard, cold, dead, barren, sinful, depraved, and they are closed to the Lord Jesus. We may come to chapel; we may come to Sunday School; we may hear the truth; we may sing the beautiful hymns. But Christ does not dwell in our hearts. Well, really we sang concerning the very point this morning:

“The crowded inn, like sinners’ hearts,
(O ignorance extreme!)
For other guests, of various sorts,
Had room; but none for Him.”

That is the inn at Bethlehem; that is you, that is me. It is a very solemn word: “There was no room ... in the inn” – no room for Mary, no room for Joseph, no room for the Saviour. “No room ... in the inn.” That is a sad picture of your heart, my heart, every heart by nature, whether religious or not religious. “No room ... in the inn.”

Now John writing later, the beloved John, the beloved disciple, takes it up more in a doctrinal way. He says, “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own” – that is the Jewish people – “and His own received Him not.” They did not want Christ to dwell in their hearts. The world does not want Christ, and you and I by nature do not want Christ. And I will tell you why. If Christ comes to dwell in our hearts, then He will dwell in our lives, and that will mean that our lives will be completely changed, and

that will mean the world will have to go and the fashions of the world and so many things you love and so many things you have delighted in, and your idols. If Christ comes to dwell in your hearts by faith, then He will dwell in your life and He will fill your life. You cannot have Christ and the world dwelling together in your heart. It must be one or the other.

You remember in the Old Testament that the Philistines captured the holy ark of God, which really in all its fulness is a beautiful type of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and when the Philistines captured the holy ark, in triumph they put it in the temple of their god Dagon. The next day they found that Dagon had fallen down smashed in pieces. You cannot have the holy ark of God and Dagon dwelling in the same temple. You cannot have Christ and the world dwelling together in your heart. Dagon must fall down dashed in pieces. What are we by nature? John Berridge puts it very quaintly, as so often he does:

“And in one bosom, false as hell,
Would have the ark and Dagon dwell.”

And then he goes on:

“But Christ will not allow
A rival near His throne.”

That is why the world does not want Christ to dwell in its heart by faith, because if Christ dwells in your heart He dwells in your life, and if Christ dwells in your life, He will dwell in your home.

Now does Christ dwell in your life and does Christ dwell in your home? What about this time of the year? People at this time of the year, strangely, religious people do things, tolerate things, allow things, that would not be thought of, not even thought of, any other time of the year. Does Christ dwell in your home?

I have often thought of that lovely character Obed-edom, one of the little-known characters of the Word of God. You remember that David brought the holy ark up to Mount Zion, and he put it on a new cart – not according to God’s appointment. The Levites were appointed to carry the ark. The oxen stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the ark, and the Lord struck him down with death. You cannot play with the things of God. They are holy things, sacred things. But we read that “David was afraid of the Lord that day.” The man after God’s own heart was afraid of God that day. Yet there was that unknown man, Obed-edom, and he

welcomed the ark into his own house. If you read Scripture carefully, he had a large family with a lot of children, and no one must come near the holy ark; no one must touch it. It must have been a tremendous sacrifice for that godly man, Obed-edom, but out of love to Israel's God, out of love to the holy ark, out of love for all that it symbolised, he gave it that loving welcome into his home. And we read it was there for several months. Everyone else was afraid of it. No one else wanted it. They did not want the risk; they did not want the sacrifice. And then we have this beautiful word recorded: "The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God."

But by nature you, me, the whole world, religious or irreligious, our hearts are closed to Christ. We do not want Him in our hearts. We are quite happy to have Him in chapel, to have Him in the hymnbook, to have Him in the Bible, but we do not want Him in our hearts, because if He is in our hearts, He is in our lives, and if He is in our lives, He is in our homes, and we will never, never be the same again. When He enters, he comes to reign.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." Well then, tell me, how is it that Christ comes to dwell in a sinner's heart? Shall I tell you in all its simplicity? There comes a time when there is a space in your heart and nothing but Christ can fill it. There is an aching void that the world can never fill. There is a space there in your heart and the world cannot satisfy it, and pleasure and ambition and riches and everything else, none of these things can satisfy it. That is the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, to make a place in a sinner's heart that nothing but Christ can fill, that nothing but Christ can satisfy. And then made willing in the day of His power, it is not just that you are willing that Christ may dwell in your heart. You say,

"O come, Thou much-expected Guest!
Lord Jesus, quickly come!
Enter the chamber of my breast;
Thyself prepare the room."

You long that Christ might enter, that He might come and dwell in your heart for ever, and nothing but this can ever satisfy you.

There are some here this morning and you are thinking of how Christ came to Bethlehem, but in your heart of hearts you are crying, "O

when wilt Thou come unto me?" O do you know that work of the Holy Spirit, preparing you for this: "Christ in you, the hope of glory"? That is what the word means, that beautiful word concerning Lydia (I wonder if we have a Lydia here this morning?): "A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira ... whose heart the Lord opened." By nature we do not have an open heart; we have a hard heart, a barren heart, a sinful heart, a worldly heart, a closed heart. But the Lord has the key of every heart, and in the new birth He comes and He opens your heart. It is made tender now in the fear of God. You feel your need now, the solemnity of your case, a soul to be saved or lost, a hell to be escaped, a heaven to be gained, sins to be forgiven, "eternity, tremendous sound!" And the Holy Spirit is opening your heart. Is there a Lydia here this morning and the Lord has opened your heart, made it ready to receive Christ?

What did we say? "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.... But as many as received Him" – that is by faith – "as many as received Him, to them gave He power" – the right, the privilege – "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." And then John gives the secret: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." So now your heart is not like the crowded inn at Bethlehem with room for everything else but not for Christ. Your heart is not hard and barren and dead and closed. O your sin, your soul, a never-ending eternity! If only Christ would come, and when He comes to dwell in your heart He comes with all the riches of His grace; He comes in mercy; He comes in love. If He comes as a Saviour, He comes to fit and prepare you for heaven. He comes to dwell with you for ever. He comes to begin that work, to carry it on, to complete it. "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

"Is there a place within thy breast
Which none but Christ can fill?
He's God, and therefore can give rest;
He's love, and therefore will."

What is this that follows?

"Did ever sinner sink to woe,
Trusting Thy pardoning grace?"

Ten thousand voices answer, ‘No!’
None die that seek His face.”

It is the great point, the vital point. It is not just Christ in the manger, Christ in His people’s place on the cross, Christ in heaven, Christ in the gospel. Has He ever entered your heart, entered your life, made it different? Does He dwell in your affections? “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” It means that you will know something of the preciousness of His presence. If He dwells in your heart you must know Him. If He dwells in your affections you will know Him whom to know is eternal life, and you will know something of the wonders of His love. You will know something of loving Him in return. When Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, you will be able to answer that question the Lord put to Simon Peter: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” You will say, “Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Let me say a word to our children, you girls and boys. When I was a little boy, probably when I was only about five or six, I first heard that hymn, “O little town of Bethlehem,” and most of you, all of you probably know it, and a lot of you really like it. Perhaps some of you have been a bit bewildered by that last verse:

“O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in;
Be born *in us* today.”

Perhaps you have been a bit puzzled what it means. Well, it means just what I have been trying to speak about this morning: Christ dwelling in our hearts, the hope of glory.

“Cast out our sin, and enter in;
Be born *in us* today.”

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” Because it is faith that prays that He might come. It is faith that makes you feel your need of Him. It is faith that welcomes Him to your heart. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” That is what the apostle meant when he spoke that rather strange word to those who were hearing him preach in Galatia. He said, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” That is the loving, prayerful desire of a gospel minister

for his hearers, that he labours for them, that Christ might be formed in their hearts.

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Of course, the word *glory* here refers to heaven. Heaven is here spoken of as glory. Like Samuel Rutherford: “Where glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land.” Well, it is a beautiful description of heaven, isn’t it? Glory. There is the glory of the place. We read of pearly gates and golden streets and harps and viols and angels and archangels. But, “The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel’s land.” That is the glory of heaven. There are a lot of beautiful descriptions of heaven. “In My Father’s house.” That is a beautiful description of heaven. There are a lot of them in the New Testament. But this is one, this one word *glory*.

Well, the point is, have you any hope of reaching glory when you die, of reaching glory at last? Have you any hope? And what kind of hope is it? Is it a vain hope, an empty hope, a false hope, a take-it-for-granted hope? Is it a hope like the foolish builder that is built only on the sand? Well, we read of a good hope through grace being an anchor of the soul, and then we read of a good hope being built on the foundation. Here the apostle is very plain. If you and I are ever to have a hope of reaching glory at last, then Christ must dwell in our hearts by faith; “Christ in *you*” – it is personal – “in *you*, the hope of glory.” O may it be our great, our chief concern this year, at this time of the year, that as Christ came to dwell in the manger, so Christ might come in love and mercy and dwell in our hearts, the hope of glory, and in a right sense, a humble sense, a gracious sense, to be able to say and sing, “O come to my heart, Lord Jesus; there is room in my heart for Thee.” O if you and I are ever going to reach glory, there must be a preparation for it.

Thinking of the Lord Jesus and why He came, may some of you have that desire, that longing, that prayer, may all of you have it, that the Lord Jesus in love and mercy might come and live in your hearts.

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”