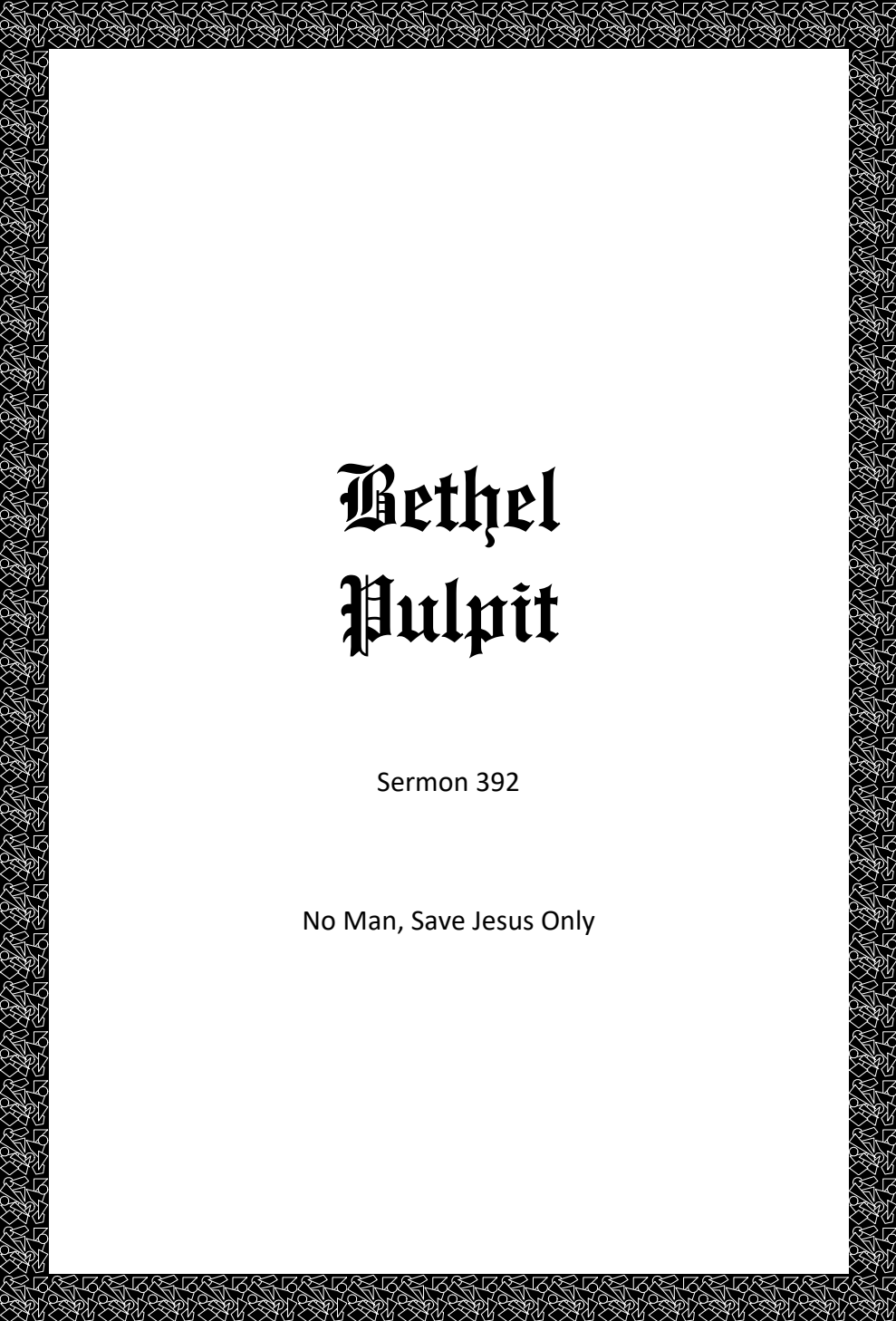




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 392

No Man, Save Jesus Only

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 25th February, 2018**

Text: *“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only” (Matthew 17. 8).*

We are told that “after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart” – the Mount of Transfiguration, usually identified as Mount Tabor. These three disciples seem to be specially chosen, specially favoured. They have been described as “the elect within the elect.” Why the Lord specially chose them, we do not know, but we do know this: that they were the three who were specially chosen to witness that solemn scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. We wonder if this was a preparation for it, because Peter never forgot it. In his Epistles he refers to it. But it must have been a trying, troubling time from every point of view with all those three disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, but they had this background that they could never forget: these amazing scenes on the Mount of Transfiguration.

When the Lord Jesus came into this world of sin and sorrow, He veiled His glory. He was “despised and rejected of men.” He grew up “as a root out of a dry ground.” The prophet says, “When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” This was the one sacred occasion when the Lord Jesus was here on earth when just for a few minutes the veil was drawn on one side, and they beheld something of the everlasting glory of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God. It was unbearable when He was transfigured before them. There was this amazing change. It must have been a solemn shock to them. “His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment” – His clothing – “was white as the light.” It was that amazing scene when the Lord revealed His essential glory just for a short time.

You remember that later, before He suffered, our Lord Jesus prayed, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory,” and that prayer will be fulfilled eternally in heaven, and in that little measure for a short time to those favoured disciples it was revealed.

But there is something really important about when it took place. Almost immediately before, and almost immediately afterwards, the Lord Jesus spoke to them of His suffering and death. Just before, “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” And almost immediately afterwards, “Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.”

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.” And then there were some mysterious happenings, mysterious transactions. “Behold.” No wonder there is a behold! “Behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias” – that is Elijah – “talking with Him.” We do not read much about the state of the glorified in heaven, but here we have the appearance on earth of two of these glorified saints. They lived centuries apart. Let us be clear, this was not a vision. Moses and Elijah – the simple reason seems to be that one was the representative of the law and the other was the representative of the prophets. They were talking with Him. They were talking to Peter and James and John. They were talking to the Lord Jesus.

In the other gospels, we are told what they were talking about: “His decease” – that is His death – “which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” We wonder what kind of things they were talking about, what they were saying to the Lord Jesus, what He was replying to them. These things are wisely hidden from us. We are told the subject: they were speaking about the Saviour’s death. But what an expression, what a word is used! It does not say His death; it says, “His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” When a person dies, he dies. We never hear of anybody accomplishing his own death. But it is a right word and it is chosen by the Holy Ghost.

If you think of what our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ accomplished at Jerusalem, what He accomplished on the cross, what He accomplished for poor, unworthy sinners. O what sermons could be

preached on the accomplishments of the Lord Jesus! When some eminent person dies, there is usually an account of his accomplishments, what he accomplished in his life. What did our Lord Jesus accomplish in His life and death? Well, the prophet said that He made “an end of sins,” and brought in an “everlasting righteousness.” And another prophet said that He opened the fountain for sin and for uncleanness. These accomplishments of Calvary have everything to do with you and me. The point is whether we have a saving interest in them or not.

O beloved friends, isn't your great point as you come to chapel this evening, as a dying sinner, to have an interest in what the dear Saviour accomplished on the cross? “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.” Behold and see the reason for it, the Saviour dying that a multitude that no man can number might live eternally and never die eternally, those who are led by the Spirit in humility and helplessness, through His grace to seek the Lord Jesus, to seek an interest in these things.

“Behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here.” Well he might say that. Do some of you feel that even now in the house of God, when we feel something of the presence and blessing of the Lord Jesus? “Lord, it is good for us to be here.” Tell me, do you ever feel it? Do you love the habitation of God's house? Do you love it because this is the place where the Saviour makes the place of His feet glorious? Do you really believe it:

“Not the fair palaces
To which the great resort,
Are once to be compared to this,
Where Jesus holds His court”?

“Lord, it is good for us to be here.” You say, Peter, so far, so good. But the other gospels tell us that Peter knew not what he was saying. Perhaps dear Peter had a weakness. He always felt he must say something. It would have been better if he had been quiet! He said, “If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” He wanted to stop on the mount, and he wanted them to stop there with him. There is a time to be silent and a time to speak, but we do

need to sympathise with people, because often people in great sorrow, or people in the ecstasy of joy, or people when they have a shock, or people when they are excited, they say some strange things! Perhaps if you mention it afterwards, they never knew that they said them.

“If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” Now the Lord did not speak, but He gave them an answer. It was while Peter was in the midst of saying all these things – he did not know what he was saying – it was “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them.” Well, they could not see any of them now. One of the gospel says, “They feared as they entered into the cloud.” O but what a revelation they had! It was the voice of Almighty God from heaven speaking of our Lord Jesus. He was not speaking about Moses; He was not speaking about Elias. “Behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.”

Now you remember at the baptism of our Lord Jesus, there was a voice from heaven which said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” – this open acknowledgement of who the Lord Jesus is, the eternal Son of God. Now just two things here, and they are important. When you look on the Lord Jesus by faith, can you say that you are well pleased with Him? You are not very well pleased with yourself. You are certainly not pleased with everybody you have contact with. But concerning yourself, going no further, you are not well pleased with your spiritual efforts and desires and your profession. Don’t you often go home and you are feeling displeased with yourself? But you are not displeased with the Lord Jesus. There are a lot of people who were offended with Him. He said, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.” It is a mercy if you and I are not offended with the Lord Jesus.

But the other thing: Almighty God is well pleased with His beloved Son, and He is well pleased with all those who stand in Him, all those who find a hiding place in Him, all those who have fled for refuge to Him.

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” But here Almighty God adds three words: “Hear ye Him.” It is universally accepted that this is a reference to the Word of God in the Book of Deuteronomy

(18. 15) when it was said, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.” So here the Lord Jesus was sealed as the eternal Son of God and He was sealed in His prophetic office.

“Great Prophet of my God,
My tongue would bless Thy name;
By Thee the joyful news
Of our salvation came;
The joyful news of sins forgiven,
Of hell subdued, and peace with heaven.”

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.” Well they might be, with that view of eternal glory! “They fell on their face, and were sore afraid.” Here you see the matchless kindness of our Lord Jesus. He had just been sealed as the Son of God; He had just appeared in all His glory; and yet His loving sympathy to these poor, unworthy sinners, Peter, James and John! He came in matchless condescension to where they were. Perhaps some of you are fearful tonight about all kinds of things; perhaps about eternity, the day when you die; perhaps things in your life and family, your business and circumstances; perhaps things in the unknown way; perhaps even tomorrow. Well, may the Lord Jesus come.

He “touched them.” What a subject this is, the touch of the Lord Jesus! There is so much in the Word of God concerning it. He touched the blind man’s eyes, and He touched the leper, and He touched the bier where that poor man lay dead.

“Thy touch has still its ancient power;
No word from Thee can fruitless fall.”

Now what we need is the Lord to come and touch our case, or to touch our hearts. That is what a lot of us would like, when we feel our hearts dry and hard and barren and prayerless – just one loving touch from the Lord Jesus, and that would make everything different, put everything right.

“And Jesus came and touched them,” and then He spoke: “Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” All those tabernacles Peter was talking about were

gone. Moses had gone; Elijah had gone. “And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” It is not one or two of you – it is quite a lot, and some who are no longer with us – on the day of your baptism you have not been conscious, hardly conscious of anybody here in the congregation. Really, on those favoured occasions, by faith you have lifted up your eyes and seen “no man, save Jesus only.” I believe there are some times with the Lord’s people when they are really concerned when they come to chapel, and it is this: they want to see “no man, save Jesus only.”

There is a beautiful prayer in the gospels. It is those Greeks who came, and they came with a request, a desire. They said, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Do you ever come to chapel like that? Is there one person here who has come to chapel like that this evening: “Sir, we would see Jesus”? You do not want something visionary. You want to see Him in His Word; you want to see Him in the gospel; you want to see the King in His beauty; you want to see Him in His suitability to meet your need. Your cry is that of David: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.” And it is this: “To behold the beauty of the Lord.” You want to behold Him by faith.

“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” Well, in the plan of salvation, in the work of grace, in the experience of the Lord’s people, it comes sooner or later to this vital point: to see Jesus only. You have to leave other things. You have to leave other people. It is,

“None but Jesus!

None but Jesus!

From His blood our hopes arise.”

Let me just speak of three things this evening in which a living soul desires to see Jesus, but not just to see Jesus, but where it is Jesus only, to the exclusion of all others. The first is this: as the ground and foundation of our hope. We have no other. There is something exclusive about real religion. “There is none other name under heaven given among men” – apart from the name of Jesus – “whereby we must be saved.” When we are brought to be really concerned about our soul, our sins, eternity, well, we may look here and we may look there, and we may try

this, and we may try something else, but in the end we are brought to this: it must be “none but Jesus.” Now I do like a Jesus only religion. Really with some of us, that seems to be the sum and substance of it all. It is just Jesus only.

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” O this is the foundation of the gospel. It is the foundation that the Lord Jesus laid in His death and resurrection. It is the foundation, the only foundation of our hope: Jesus only. And so there is a resting place here. Roman Catholics would agree with everything said this evening about Jesus Christ being the Son of God, with everything said about Jesus Christ being the Saviour, but they would disagree on this one point: Jesus only. No, it must be Jesus and a certain amount of works, and Jesus and keeping certain rites and ceremonies. But we must be brought to this. That is why some people are held in bondage, because they believe, they truly believe in the Lord Jesus, but it is not this: to let all other foundations go. But this is the Spirit’s work. We have to find that other foundations are crumbling. They are among those things which can be shaken, which shall not remain.

But these things are vital, and we are unworthy; we are sinful; we do not deserve it. We want some solid ground to rest upon, and it is this: Jesus only in His Person, and in His mercy and love, in His promises, in His righteousness, in His precious blood, in His death, in His resurrection, in His all-prevailing intercession, almighty to save.

“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” Now the second thing: it must be Jesus only as our Example. We rest upon Him as our hope, our salvation, and then we are to look to Him as our Example, and we are called to follow Him in obedience. Now it must be Jesus only. We can follow godly men, godly women, but only as far as they follow Christ. How many have been led astray! They have been taken up with some godly person, and they have sought to follow him; they have admired him; but there was a flaw in his life, and they have followed him in his flaw, and perhaps they have gone further than him in his flaw, and but for restoring grace, where would they have been?

What a beautiful example there is in our Lord Jesus! John the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” That is salvation. But then, “Looking upon Jesus as He walked,

he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” Now that is following His gracious example. So often we seem to follow afar off and follow so feebly. But there is a standard here, because there is so much in the Word of God about the behaviour and the profession of the Lord’s people. “Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ,” which simply means do not let there be any contradiction between what you believe and how you behave, between the things you hear and the things you do. May there be that gracious union between what we profess and what the New Testament calls our conversation, which is the whole of our behaviour. Our hymnwriter says,

“In the whole of your behaviour,
Own Him for your Sovereign Guide.”

“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” So Jesus only as the ground and foundation of our hope, and then Jesus only as our example, and then thirdly, Jesus only, the Source of our supplies. For, “Who is sufficient for these things?” How empty we are, and how unworthy, and how helpless, and we have so many needs, in providence and in grace. Now it is this: Jesus only, the Source of our supplies, or as the psalmist put it, “All my springs are in Thee” – my springs of comfort, my springs of help, my springs of salvation, those springs supporting me, those springs supplying my needs, those springs hearing and answering my prayers. Well, needy sinners we are, needy sinners as we leave the chapel, but may we be helped to look to Jesus as the Source of our supplies, not looking to an arm of flesh, but thinking of that promise: “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” Well, often our eyes are here and there. They are not looking up; they are looking down, or they are looking within, or they are looking around, or they are looking where they should not be looking. But may the Lord bless us with that faith to lift up our eyes, and looking there to see the Object of our chief desire. “The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee.” “None but Jesus,” our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, Jesus only.

“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”