

Bethel

Pulpit

Longing for the Lord to Come

Sermon Number 484

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 7th December, 2017**

Text: “*O when wilt Thou come unto me?*” (Psalm 101. 2).

We do not keep the ecclesiastical calendar, but I am sure all of you realise that this time of the year is usually known as *advent*. The word simply means *coming*, and refers to the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In some of the churches, people seek to try to make some special preparation at this time of the year – the coming of our Lord Jesus, the waiting for it, the longing for it, the expecting it.

“When wilt Thou come unto me?” Now this was the language of the Old Testament church. How many poured out their hearts in spirit in this word, longing for the coming of the Saviour! They knew that one day He would come, and they knew why He would come. They knew the blessedness of it, and many of them lived and died hoping that they would have lived to see that day, the day of Christ. But as Hebrews 11 tells us, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises.” But they had so many promises on which they could hang and which they could plead. O when will the Saviour come? And they had so many prophecies telling the details of His coming, giving the very house of David, being born even at Bethlehem – so many details concerning His coming. And then of course, they had all the types and the shadows, especially the lamb slain, the blood shed, atonement, forgiveness, looking forward to Calvary, and many lived and died in this faith, looking forward to this expected Saviour that they did not live to see.

Of course, at the time of the Saviour’s birth there were those like godly Simeon. This is what they were waiting for: “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” And there were those like Anna. She ceased not day and night to go into the temple, though she was of such a great age. Really, in a sense the Old Testament was a time of advent, waiting for the Lord’s coming. In the chapter I read this evening (Malachi 3), “Behold, *He shall come*, saith the Lord of hosts.”

“When wilt Thou come unto me?” Now, “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son.” He did not disappoint the hopes

of His ancient people, but it was at His time, the appointed time, the time fixed in God's counsels in eternity. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." When He came, His name was Jesus, "for He shall save His people from their sins." When He came, His name was Immanuel, God with us. He did not come, as some wondered at the time, in outward might and glory, as a natural Messiah, just to deliver people from the authority of the Romans, but He came to save. He did not disappoint His people in coming, and He did not disappoint His people in what He did when He came. He "went about doing good." What a word is that! You think of all that He did, but then you go to Gethsemane and the judgment hall and Calvary, and the Saviour suffered and bled and died. He opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, that "the vilest sinner out of hell, who lives to feel his need," might be "welcome to the throne of grace, the Saviour's blood to plead."

All those promises were fulfilled, all the prophecies, all the types. We think of the risen Saviour, and how He opened it up to those on the road to Emmaus. Then to His disciples afterwards He unfolded to them all those things they had long been expecting that were written of Him in the Scriptures. Then "He led them out as far as to Bethany," and ascended up to heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God, His work for ever finished.

So that is what we call the Saviour's first advent, His first coming, when He came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," when "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," the Saviour did. But then there is the second advent, His second coming. The ancient church joined these two together. I think you find it in some of the well-known hymns. If you look at the section on advent in some of the well-known books, you find,

"Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes,
The Saviour promised long."

That is His first coming. And then you have things like that magnificent hymn on His second coming:

"Lo! He comes, with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain,"

when He comes to "judge the word in righteousness," to take His people to Himself. Now the ancient church could longingly say, "When wilt Thou

come?” What about His second coming, when He comes to “judge the world in righteousness,” to separate the sheep from the goats? Can we really say, longingly, “When wilt Thou come?” That was the religion of the New Testament: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” May that blessed hope be ours! But the vital point is to be ready, to be prepared. We do not want to be like the foolish virgins, for when the solemn cry was heard, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh,” they were looking to find oil for their lamps, because their lamps were empty. “And they that were ready” – and only they that were ready – “went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.”

“When wilt Thou come?” Now passing on, beloved friends, in this subject from the first advent and the second advent, considering these two important occasions, we look at this little psalm itself. It seems clear that this was a psalm that David wrote when he was appointed king. His great concern was to rule wisely, and rule well, and act rightly in the sight of God, for His honour and glory, for the good of the kingdom, and for his own personal good. Right at the beginning he says, “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” He knew one thing: he needed the Lord’s help; he could not do without it. He knew another thing: he needed the Lord to be with him; he needed the Lord’s gracious presence; he could not do without it. “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” If the Lord did not come for his help, if the Lord did not come to be with him, then everything would end in confusion. David himself was a wise man and a godly man and a mighty man, but he needed the Lord to be with him, and he realised everything must end in confusion if the Lord was *not* with him.

“When wilt Thou come unto me?” Now I want to pass on to it personally, because when a sinner is brought to feel his need, his need of a Saviour, his need of salvation, this is his cry: “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” It is very personal. It is “unto me.” We know the Lord does come to His people, and He blesses them, but, “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” We know that the Lord graciously comes to the assemblies of His people when they meet for worship, because He has promised it, but, “When wilt Thou come unto me?” It is that word we have: “Remember *me*, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit *me* with Thy salvation.” That is what it means. “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” It is crying that the Lord will visit us.

But the point is, we are unfit, we are sinful, we are unworthy, and yet we believe that the Lord in the riches of His grace *does* visit sinners. So that cry: “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” Perhaps you feel it especially. You hear of some person being favoured, some person being blessed, and perhaps you feel you are passed by, you feel you are left out. This is your cry: “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” It is like that word so often we remind you of with poor, blind Bartimaeus. He was blind, but he could hear them shouting, “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” But he did not want Jesus to pass *him* by. He wanted Jesus to come right where he was, to do everything for him, to bless him, to open his eyes. It was an urgent, pressing case. That is it: “Do not pass me by.”

“O when wilt Thou come unto me?” So you want the Lord to come, and you want Him to come right where you are, because you feel helpless; and you want Him to do everything for you, because you feel weak; and you want Him to do it in mercy, because you feel unworthy and guilty. So this is your cry: “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” You do not want to go on day by day and the Lord never visits you personally. You do not want to spend all your life going to chapel, backwards and forwards, and never having a visit from the Lord.

“More frequent let Thy visits be,
Or let them longer last.”

I know that is how it is written, but Mr. Wolstenholme told me when he was a young member of the church at Blackburn, there was a person went to the pastor and said, “You always quote it wrongly.” The pastor said, “Why do I quote it wrongly:

‘More frequent let Thy visits be,
Or let them longer last’?”

The old man said, “We do not want any *or* in it!

‘More frequent let Thy visits be,
And let them longer last.’”

It is only living souls who know language like this, in the experience of it or in the longing desire for it. Others can be satisfied merely with the outward letter of divine truth, but you want the reality of vital godliness. You want the Lord to come like the good Samaritan. He did everything for that poor, wounded man by the wayside. That is what you want the Lord

Jesus to do for you. How do you want Him to come? You want Him to come as the Saviour, but you want Him to come as your Saviour; you want Him to save you by His grace. You want Him to forgive you. You want Him to wash you in His precious blood. You want Him to keep you. You want Him to uphold you. You want Him to be with you. You want Him to help you. You want Him to prepare you. Really, you want Him to do everything for you.

There you are in all your emptiness and in all your need, and there you see that wonderful fullness of grace and love and mercy in Christ. O when will those blessings be mine? You see those streams of living water that flow from eternal love. You want them to flow to you, to flow into your heart. You hear of the gospel table being spread. You want it to be spread for you. You want to be a partaker. You do not just want to be an onlooker. We read, He “hath made us meet to be *partakers* of the inheritance of the saints in light.” That is what you want – not just to be a bystander, an onlooker, but to be a partaker.

“O when wilt Thou come unto me?” Then, beloved friends, there are special times when you feel the need of this. With David it was a special time. He had something new. He had a burden. He had a mountain before him. He had something he had not had before. He could not manage it without the Lord. He wanted the Lord to come where he was, to help him, to deliver him, to bring him through. “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” Sometimes you will be like that. You will always want the Lord to be with you, to help you, but there are those times when you have something fresh. It may be a mountain in your pathway, something in your life, some trouble that comes, some problem or difficulty, or some sudden affliction, or some deep affliction with those you love, and you long for that one thing, that the Lord will not fail to come. You long that He will arise for your help. It may be something spiritual. You feel a special need that the Lord might come. It may be providential. You feel that need for the Lord to come.

Of course, we have a very clear instance of it in the gospels when the disciples were constrained to go over to the other side of the lake, and the Lord Jesus went up to the top of the mountain to pray. They were toiling in rowing. The wind was contrary to them. And we have this statement: “It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.” Some of you have perhaps been in that, and some of you are perhaps there at present. They had got something. It was perhaps unexpected; it was severe. They did not know

how to manage it, and the Lord Jesus was not with them. They did not know He was watching over them. They did not know He was up in the top of the mountain praying for them. They did not know He could see them.

“He sees us when we see not Him,
And always hears our cry.”

They were in this spirit: why does He not come? One of our little hymns says, “When will my Saviour come?” But He did come, and He came majestically. There was not any way He could, but He made that stormy sea His pathway. He came walking over it. He said, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” That is what you would like: “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

“Why those fears? behold, ’tis Jesus
Holds the helm, and guides the ship.”

“O when wilt Thou come unto me?” There are these sad things that come, but especially when the time comes for you to die. “Ye have not passed this way heretofore.” O the many times we are taught this lesson:

“I cannot do without Thee,
Thou Saviour of the lost.”

I am sure many of you this evening can echo that. It is Jesus only you want. You might think of Him as Prophet, Priest, King, the great Shepherd, all His glorious offices and relationships, your Advocate, your Surety, your Mediator, but you want Him as your Helper. “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” There is no substitute. There is nobody else can help you.

“No arm can reach my desperate case
But His whose name is Truth and Grace.”

So this is your cry: “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” It is so personal. It is so vital. It is so urgent.

“When wilt Thou come unto me?” Now coming towards the end this evening, there are two things specially I want to say, and one is this: if you look at this word, it has a question mark at the end: “When wilt Thou come unto me?” – *question mark*. Let us be clear, beloved friends: it is not a question; it is a prayer, and it is an urgent prayer. It is not a question. “When wilt Thou come unto me?” It might be next week; it might be on the coming Friday. It is not that. It is really that begging: Lord Jesus, come

quickly. It is the urgency of it. “*When* wilt Thou come unto me?” It is a prayer, not a question. It is begging, pleading, longing, asking the Lord to come.

In our common parlance we often use expressions like this. You perhaps see an old friend you really like, and for some reason he has not been to see you for months. You do not know why. Perhaps he has not been able; perhaps he has not been well, or perhaps he has forgotten. You happen to meet him, and what do you say to him? “When are you going to come to see me?” It is not a question. “When are you going to come to see me?” You do not want him to put some date in the unknown future, and say, I will come then. “When will you come to see me?” You mean this: you are longing that he might come to see you, but especially you want him to come to see you soon.

So it is a prayer. “When wilt Thou come unto me?”

“Come, O my Saviour dear,
And cheer my fainting soul!”

“O *when* wilt Thou come unto me?” Now the second thing. Perhaps some of you realise, perhaps some of you do not, but there is another scripture, usually ascribed to David, and it is exactly the same as this, except for one word being different. I am thinking of something that David said in Psalm 119. Now here he says, “When wilt Thou come unto me?” In the long psalm he puts it like this: “When wilt Thou *comfort* me?” Now there is not any contradiction between those two. If the Lord in love and mercy comes, He will come to comfort you. He might correct you; He may chastise you; but He will still comfort you. And if the Lord is ever to comfort you, it will not just be through reading a good book or even reading God’s holy Word. You need the Lord Himself in the riches of His grace to come where you are and to comfort you, because one thing that God’s people love is comfort – not a false comfort that lifts us up to confidence that’s vain; not carnal comfort; but the comfort of the gospel.

“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins” – which I always take to mean double blessing for the opposite that the sinner deserved. O that comfort! It is a mercy that God describes Himself as “the God of all comfort.” It is a mercy that the

Word of God is full of it, and it is a wonderful mercy that one of the beautiful names of the Holy Ghost is *the Comforter*.

There was a well-known Scottish minister. He was going to take his first pastorate, and he had it all fitted out, his first sermon for his congregation. It was well prepared. He had thought about it for a long time – all the iniquity and all the things that had to be changed, the warnings needed. That night he had a dream, the night before his first sermon, and he saw his congregation as they really were: some groaning under their sin, some groaning under their sorrow, so many in distress. As he woke up, these words came: “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people.” It was a completely different sermon he preached from the one which he planned.

So beloved friends, those of you who are longing that this word might be fulfilled, may the Saviour come, and when He comes, may it be to “Breathe comfort where distress abounds.”

“O when wilt Thou come unto Me?”

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Light of those whose dreary dwelling
Borders on the shades of death,
Come, and, Thy bright beams revealing,
Dissipate the clouds beneath.
The new heaven’s and earth’s Creator,
In our deepest darkness rise,
Scattering all the night of nature,
Pouring day upon our eyes.

Still we wait for Thy appearing;
Life and joy thy beams impart,
Chasing all our fears, and cheering
Every poor benighted heart.
Come, and manifest the favour
Thou hast for the ransomed race;
Come, Thou dear exalted Saviour!
Come, and bring thy gospel grace.

C. Wesley