



Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 35

The Preciousness of Christ (2)

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 3rd April, 1988 (Easter Sunday)**

Text: *“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious” (1 Peter 2. 7).*

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make the Lord Jesus precious to His people. We think of that very beautiful ancient prophecy: “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” Now there you have the work of the Holy Spirit in the sinner's heart, making this glorious Man, the Man Christ Jesus, precious to faith. “I will make a man more precious than fine gold.” There is a comparison and there is a contrast. Not only will the Holy Ghost make Christ precious to your soul, but He will make Him more precious, more precious than those things you once loved, more precious than the world, more precious than your idols, so that you will have to leave them for Christ's sake. It is not just Christ made precious. It is “more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” I take it that the golden wedge of Ophir was something which was notorious for its extreme value, as we today might say the crown jewels or all the wealth in the Bank of England. “More precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.”

The Lord Jesus is especially precious as this Man. That is, in His sacred humanity. He will be made precious to you in His Godhead, the eternal Son of God, the Son of God from everlasting. You will realise that who He is in His divine Person is what gives the value, the efficacy, to His work. O but like Luther it will be, “Let me see God in my nature.” And when we see this dear Man holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens, a real Man yet true almighty God, “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” This Man who shall be thy peace. This Man who when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down at the right hand of God. “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” Some of us look back to our beginnings when Christ was revealed in all His preciousness and when we used to sing,

“Not health, nor wealth, nor sounding fame,
Nor earth’s deceitful, empty name,
With all its pomp and all its glare,
Can with a precious Christ compare.”

There was one thing needful and only one thing needful then. “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.”

With the Lord’s help, very simply this evening, I want to try to speak to you concerning the preciousness of Christ, realising, solemnly realising that “living tongues are dumb at best; we must die to speak of Christ.” But, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” Now first of all, He is precious in His mysterious incarnation. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” We see Him in that eternal glory which was His before all worlds in the bosom of His eternal Father, the object of the adoration of angels.

“But lo! He leaves those heavenly forms;
The Word descends and dwells in clay,
That He may hold converse with worms,
Dressed in such feeble flesh as they.”

Now has Christ ever been made precious to you in His incarnation, that wonderful birth at Bethlehem, that matchless condescension, being made a little lower than the angels? “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.” There is no hope for your guilty soul apart from the Word made flesh.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” The Lord Jesus will be precious to you in that holy life which He lived. O what a beautiful, spotless, holy life it was! And you will see it as the example for all believers. But you know, the preciousness of it will be this, that He lived that life for you. You and I have no righteousness to stand before a Holy God. Divine justice demands such a righteousness. So the incarnate Son of God spent His holy life that He might provide that righteousness that you and I never could provide. Going “to the end of

the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” fulfilling the holy law of God in all its precepts, magnifying the law and making it honourable, so that in Christ there is that perfect righteousness so often compared to a pure, white, spotless robe, the robe of righteousness, to be our covering, our everlasting, heavenly dress. Now has the righteousness, the imputed righteousness of Christ ever been made precious to you as a sinner because you feel you have none of your own? And if you live and die with nothing but your own righteousness, it will be this: “Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?”

O but are you brought to this, the value, the preciousness of this spotless robe, this pure, white, spotless robe, which completely covers all the people of God? I go back to my early days of preaching, one Easter Sunday at Old Hill. The late pastor, Mr. E. G. Rowell, was still alive although in his last days and no longer able to preach. I tried to speak that Easter Sunday evening from the word that ends: “This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and I tried to speak on the righteousness of Christ. Now there was a very large congregation there in those days and at the end of the service many of them used to gather round the old pastor – he could not move from his seat – to say “Goodnight.” O but didn’t he take up the theme! His heart seemed overwhelmed with the love of Christ. He said, “Look at this beautiful robe that I am wearing! Look at this pure, beautiful, spotless, white robe that I am wearing!” One young man stood forward and peered as if he was trying to see it, and the dear old man went on: “No, you can’t see it with your mortal eyes.

“And, lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around.”

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious,” in that glorious robe of imputed righteousness.

And then you see the preciousness of His precious blood. Whatever would you and I do without it? Peter especially dwells on this. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Our hymnwriter describes it as

“invaluable blood.” And I believe that every sinner taught of the Spirit of God will count the blood of Christ to be precious. You will not trifle with it. You will not speak glibly of it. You will realise that you are on holy ground. You may not feel your interest in it, but there will be such an attraction in it. It will be the ground of your hope, that precious blood which began to flow in the garden of Gethsemane before any human hand touched Him, that blood that flowed when He was crowned with thorns and when He endured that cruel scourging, that blood which flowed when He was nailed to the cross and when the cruel spear pierced His side. O this blood, this precious blood, is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, where the vilest sinners wash and are made clean. It is nearly two thousand years since this precious blood was shed, since the fountain was opened. But it has lost none of its efficacy. In heaven tonight the Redeemer appears “a Lamb as it had been slain.” It signifies that His precious, sin-atonement blood has the same value, the same efficacy tonight.

“That sacred flood, from Jesus’ veins,
Was free to take away
A Mary’s or Manasseh’s stains,
Or sins more vile than they.”

Precious blood!

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” It is precious because it *is* the blood of Christ. It is precious because of the awful sufferings and agonies that He endured even unto death, for He must die, death being the wages of sin and sin being imputed to Him. But it is so precious to a believer because it opens a way to heaven for him. It is his only plea as he seeks mercy. It is sprinkled upon the mercyseat. So as a guilty sinner he may come. It is the ground of his acceptance, his access to a holy God.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” And then that wonderful love which flows through it all. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Now that word embraces both eternities and it comes right down into this world of sorrow and suffering and it embraces those who are described as “His own,” the identical people with these here described as those which believe. “Having loved His own” – from eternity – “which were in the world, He

loved them unto the end.” And the supreme display of that love is in the cross of Christ and how precious the cross will be to you. The supreme display of the love of Christ! For “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

“To live upon His precious death
Is faith’s divine repast;
The language of His dying breath,
See how she holds it fast!”

Those precious words from the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” That dying cry: “It is finished.” You see, as Christ is made precious to you in His love, how precious in the words which He spoke! The words He spoke on the cross, and the words which He spoke throughout His early life! Like this: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And precious in every promise that He has given you. Promises like this: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” Precious in His burial. They “beheld where He was laid,” the burial of the Lord Jesus witnessing to the reality of His death, being identified with His people, going before them, sanctifying the grave, perfuming it with His presence. For,

“The graves of all His saints He blessed,
And softened every bed.”

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” And today we especially think of the preciousness of the Lord Jesus in His resurrection. O that rolling away of the stone, that power that took the sting out of death, the victory from the grave.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious,” as a risen, living Saviour who says, “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.” There is something very precious in the resurrection. I love to preach the resurrection. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead. The resurrection did not make the Son, but it was the open evidence from His eternal Father that He was the Son. It is also the evidence, the pledge of His people’s justification, that the sacrifice has been accepted, that he “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Had He remained in the grave, if Christ had not risen from the dead, “we are of all men most miserable.”

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” For “now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” And he says to each believer, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” It is a wonderful thing to “know Him and the power of His resurrection.” He can be known. So can the power of His resurrection be known.

“His death procured thy peace,
His resurrection’s thine;
Believe; receive the full release;
'Tis signed with blood divine.”

Now I want to linger here on the preciousness of Christ in His resurrection. Wasn’t He precious to dear Mary Magdalene? There she was weeping by the open sepulchre. “They have taken away the Lord, . . . and we know not where they have laid Him.” Blessed woman, weeping after Christ! Blessed characters here this evening weeping after Christ, weeping because you have not got Him, because you cannot find Him! O that first word of the risen Saviour: “Woman, why weepest thou?” In other words, no cause for tears now the Saviour is risen no more to die. It is like some of you here this evening. You cannot see the Lord Jesus for your tears and yet He is so near to you. She thought He was the gardener. There never was a sadder woman on this earth, and yet in a few moments her sorrow was to be turned into joy, her darkness into light, her bondage into liberty. Why was she so sorrowful? Well, first of all because she had lost a loved Master and Friend. But especially because she was such a great sinner and if Christ had not risen from the dead, what of the awful load of her sins? Jesus said unto her, “Mary.” And that one word was everything. It spoke peace and pardon and salvation and forgiveness and heaven itself. It came from the lips of the newly-risen Saviour.

“Rabboni,” my Lord and my God. Now wasn’t the Lord Jesus, the risen Saviour, precious to Mary Magdalene? “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.”

We think of those on the road to Emmaus. Now wasn’t the Lord Jesus precious to them? They reasoned, and their reasoning did not help. Their hearts were sorrowful. They could not turn their sorrow into joy. This is the preciousness of Christ. “Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them.” That did it. And beloved friends, that will do it for you tonight. “Did not our heart” – one heart – “burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” O what a sermon it must have been and how the preciousness of Christ must have been made known in it! It is no wonder that from overflowing hearts they cried, “Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.”

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” We think of that little group in the upper room on the evening of the resurrection day. The doors were shut because of the fear of the Jews and “Jesus Himself stood in the midst.” Now that is what some of us want, isn’t it? “Less than Thyself will not suffice.” “Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and said unto them, Peace be unto you.” “Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.” When He said this, He showed unto them His wounded hands and His wounded feet and His wounded side, the marks of His suffering, the evidence of His love towards them, the pledge that it was this same Jesus.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” And then Thomas. Thomas was not there. O how much Thomas missed! We see him full of doubt. “Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.” And then a week later when in matchless love and condescension the Lord Jesus appeared, didn’t He make Himself precious to Thomas? And the way He spoke to Thomas makes one thing abundantly clear. He had heard everything Thomas said, every doubting word, every trembling statement, because He repeats it all to Thomas. But there, as He revealed Himself to this poor, dear man, “Unto you

therefore which believe He is precious.” And Thomas said, “My Lord and my God.”

And then we think of Peter. O how the Lord made Himself precious to Peter! Three times He had denied his Lord and Master. Three times he must make that confession of love. Three times is he restored to his apostleship. “Feed My lambs; feed My sheep; feed My sheep.” But O the preciousness of the Lord Jesus, His love the same, His mercy the same, His favour the same!

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” May we together today know and feel and sweetly experience something of the power of His resurrection. May we together know the preciousness of it. And may we know that wonderful blessing of which Peter spoke, “Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Beloved friends, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” “And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.” And while He lifted up His hands and blessed them, He was received up into heaven out of their sight. So He was precious in His ascension, and in His exaltation. He said, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” In the Book of the Revelation we have a glimpse of the other side of the cloud: the strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” That is the book of God’s eternal decrees, His book of providence. And there was no one able to open the book. And John says, “I wept much.” And then you see the risen, ascended Saviour approach the eternal throne. “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” And John says, “I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb as it had been slain.”

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious,” as an exalted Saviour, as He appears in heaven, the Lamb as it had been slain, the Object of the love and worship of saints and angels to all eternity. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” and hath redeemed us unto God by His blood.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” How precious in that everlasting priesthood, that priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, as He presents the merits of His finished work, as there He for ever intercedes! “This Man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” Then, “What think ye of Christ?” Have you a sweet hope that through mercy, though a sinner so ruined and guilty, you have been brought to believe on Him to the saving of your soul? And have you got a sweet hope that He is precious to your soul, that you can lay your hand on your heart and you can honestly say,

“Yes, Thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust;
Jewels to Thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust”?

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” He is not precious to the world. He is not precious to those who merely name His name. But, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” You see, the Holy Ghost lays this down as the mark of every true believer. With some believers there are some paths they are especially led into and with others there are other paths they are especially led into. Some love one part of Scripture and some love another part of Scripture. But you see, with all the Lord’s chosen, with all the Lord’s redeemed, each one without exception, it is this: that they are brought highly to esteem the Lord Jesus. He is made precious to their souls, precious as all they need, all they seek, precious in all His suitability, precious as their only hope, precious because they cannot do without Him. It is so to every believer, in all ages, from Adam’s day to the end of time.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” Mind you, with God’s people at different times of their life they are led into different aspects of it. We look back to our early days and it was the time of our espousals to Christ. It was as when Abraham’s servant said, “Wilt thou go with this man?” And faith said, “I will go,” and our souls in love were married to Christ. We used to say,

“Hail, great Immanuel, all divine!
In Thee Thy Father’s glories shine;
Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest One,
That eyes have seen or angels known.”

As years have gone on, there has been the conflict and the pilgrimage, the fight of faith, the spiritual voyage, the storms, the trials, the temptations, the crooked things, the mountains in the way. We have had to wrestle. We have had to struggle. And as we have gone on, perhaps today it is in more of a different way we see the preciousness. O the preciousness of that blood-sprinkled mercyseat, the preciousness of delivering grace in the trying hour, the preciousness of His wonderful faithfulness despite all our unfaithfulness! O the preciousness of that keeping, that upholding, when we must have fallen ten thousand times! O the preciousness of that help continually communicated! So at different times in the believer’s life he sees the preciousness of Christ in different ways. It is just like when there is some most valuable diamond and which ever way you look at it, as the light gleams upon it, you can see fresh beauty in it. And beloved friends, there are still fresh beauties and glories in Christ that none of us as yet have seen, and some of His beauties and glories we shall never fully see until we see Him face to face. But wherever we are and whatever we are, if we belong to Christ it will ever be this: “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” Now beloved friends, do you possess this God-given, Holy Ghost-given mark of being a true believer, because if so, heaven is yours?

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” And what of the three great questions? “What think ye of Christ?” Now can you give a right answer to that question? And, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” Can you answer that question? Is there anyone here tonight who can say,

“Do not I love Thee, dearest Lord?
Behold my heart and see.”

“If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” And finally, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” Has Christ been made precious to your soul?