

“THE GOSPEL AWAKENING.”

COMPRISING THE

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES,

Prayer Meeting Talks and Bible Readings,

OF THE

GREAT REVIVAL MEETINGS,

CONDUCTED BY

MOODY AND SANKEY,

IN THE CITIES OF

Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Boston,

WITH THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

CHRISTIAN CONVENTIONS OF MINISTERS AND LAYMEN.

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ALSO THE LIVES OF

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WHAT SEEK YE?

“One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.” JOHN 1:40.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” MATTHEW 6:33.

There are two things I want to call your attention to, this evening. The first is in the words of the 1st chapter of John, 40th verse; and the second is in the 6th chapter of Matthew, 33d verse. The first text is the first words that fell from the lips of Christ, at the commencement of his ministry. It was the question he put to those two disciples who came and questioned him as to where he dwelt. One afternoon, about four o’clock, John the Baptist stood with two of his disciples, and Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, a little way off; and John lifted up his hand and pointed to the man off in the distance, and said: “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world!” and John, the beloved disciple, and Andrew left their old master and went together toward Jesus; and Jesus turned around as they came up to him and said: “What seek ye?” I thought this evening I would like for a few moments to call your attention to that text, and press that question home upon the people here. I would like to have all of you ask yourselves the questions: What are you seeking? What did you come for? What motive brought you here this evening? What do these great crowds of people here mean, day after day, week after week.

There were all classes of people seeking for Christ, and they had every kind of motive for seeking him. There were some who came out of curiosity, just to see what would happen. There was another class who came to him because they had friends that were diseased, and they wanted their friends to be healed and blessed. There was the class who came with the hope of getting the loaves and fishes. And there was still another class, that were trying to murder him and get him out of the way; they were watching him, and striving to get him into some conversation in which they might entangle him with his words, and so get an excuse to bring him before the Sanhedrim, and cause him to be called guilty of blasphemy, and punished. Some sought him for what they could get; and others sought him for what he was. And that is the class we are after, namely, those who are not seeking Christ for what they can get, but who are seeking him for what he is, personally. I have no doubt but that a great many of the disciples first sought him in order to be identified with him; because they thought he would set up an earthly kingdom, and establish his throne upon earth. Judas perhaps thought so, and that he might become the chief treasurer of such a kingdom; and perhaps Peter thought that he might become the chief secretary; and when the sons of Zebedee found

out that it was a spiritual kingdom that he was to establish, their mother came and asked of Christ that her sons might be placed the one upon his right hand, and the other upon his left. All the time during his ministry, Christ constantly found men seeking for office and honor; and that is precisely the spirit today. One of our greatest troubles, and one great reason why we do not get greater blessings from God, is because we are not pure in our motives for seeking him. I say there is not a man or a woman (and I see they are nearly all women here tonight), who has come here for a blessing from God, and who has that motive, but will get it. Others will go away without any blessing, and with hearts as hard and cold as ever. Why? Because they have not come to get a blessing.

I would like to ask you to take this brief question home to your hearts today, "What seek ye?" What are you after this evening? What motive brought you to this place? I think one would say; "I came because some friends of mine were coming; I did not have any particular motive at all; I came because my friends asked me to come." I ask another, What did you come for? "Well, I came to see the crowd; I heard there were a great many men and women here; and I thought it would be a wonderful sight to see so many together." A man told me the other day that he came to see the chairs. He said he heard there were 10,000 chairs all in one hall; and he thought they must look so strange. He had a curiosity to see them. Thank God, that man got caught in the gospel net that very night; and I hope some others that come just out of curiosity, this evening, will get caught with the old gospel net. But, to return to our question, What brought you here? A lady over there says; "I came to hear the singing; I don't care anything about the preaching. I have heard the word preached till I am tired of it; and if I had my way about it, I would rather get up and go out as soon as the singing is over." But if any of you have come here with such motives, and will change your minds after you get here, and will seek to come to God tonight, you will find him, whatever your motive was at first in coming. You may even have come here to make sport of the meeting; you may have come here to ridicule everything you should hear; but if you will repent, and change your mind, the Lord Jesus will bless you tonight, and forgive you, and this may be the best meeting you ever was at in your life.

Now I want to call your attention to the other text I spoke of. My text is both a question and a command. The question is, "What seek ye?" and the command is this: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This is just as much a command as that is, that Thou shalt not steal. It is just as much a command for us to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as it is a command that we shall not swear. It is one of the commands of the Bible. Jesus, when he was down here, in that memorable sermon on the Mount, said: "Seek first the

kingdom of God.” That was to come first; it was to come in ahead of everything else. The Master’s ways are not our ways. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. What we put last, God puts first; what we put first, he puts last; the whole thing is reversed. We say, we do not want to seek the kingdom of God first. We have a good many things that must be attended to, before we seek the kingdom of God. I know, if persons think they would like to be converted, they always think they have some preparations to make beforehand. Now, this is just as much a command today as it was so, many hundreds of years ago. Do you think if he was on earth today, he would alter that command? Do you think he would say for you to put off your salvation for one hour? Do you think he would tell you to seek his kingdom at some future time? Every day we hear of persons dying suddenly; sometimes without God and without hope, because they have not obeyed this command to seek first the kingdom of God. One reason that people do not seek first the kingdom of God is this: that they do not believe that God is real, and that he has a kingdom, and that they can find him; but they make light of the existence of his kingdom. The whole living world is seeking for something. There is not a person in this world who is not seeking for something. Then why not seek for the best things? If people will so seek for temporal things, doesn’t it serve to show that you do not believe that God is real; or else you would first seek the kingdom of God, and find it before any of these other things?

I heard, some time ago, of a young man who wanted to become a Christian. His father was a worldly man, full of ambition and a desire to get on. His son went to him and told him his wish. The father turned around in astonishment, put on a dissatisfied look, and said: “My son, you have made a mistake. You had better wait until you get established in business; wait till you get older; better wait till you make some money; there is plenty of time yet to become a Christian.” Does any young man here believe that? You know what the rich man in the scripture said and did. That man had got well on in business; he had made lots of money; his goods were increasing every year. At last, after an unusually plentiful harvest, he found he had to build more barns and storehouses. He felt sure of being able to enjoy himself; he was happy and contented, as he thought how his bank account was swelling, “Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many days.” He never thought of the future; the present was all he cared anything about. But in his fancied security, he heard the dread and startling summons, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” He had to leave all these things behind him; death snatched him away, and he lost the heaven he had neglected to make sure of on earth.

I heard a story of a young lady who was deeply concerned about her soul. Her father and mother, however, were worldly people. They thought lightly of her serious wishes; they did not sympathize with her state of mind. They

made up their minds that she should not become a Christian, and tried every way they could to discourage her notions about religion. At last they thought they would get up a large party, and thus with gayety and pleasure win her back to the world. So they made every preparation for a gay time; they even sent to neighboring towns, and got all her most worldly companions to come to the house; they bought her a magnificent silk dress and jewelry, and decked her out in all the finery of such an occasion. The young lady thought there would be no harm in attending the party; that it would be a trifling affair, a simple thing, and she could, after it was over, think again of the welfare of her soul. She went, decked out in all her adornments, and was the belle of the ball. Three weeks from that night she was on her dying bed. She asked her mother to bring her ball-dress in. She pointed her finger at it, and, bursting into tears said, “ That is the price of my soul.” She died before the dawn. Oh, my friends, if you are anxious about your soul, let everything else go; let parties and festivals pass. Seek ye first the kingdom of God; then all these things will be added unto you. God commands you to do it. If you are lost—if you die in your sin—whose fault is it? God has commanded you to repent, and to seek salvation at once.

Are any of you going to take the responsibility of putting it off? You complain because Christ is urged upon you; you complain because your friends are anxious about you. How can they be otherwise than anxious? You heard what Mr. Sankey said a little while ago, about the death of a husband of one of our choir. This morning, while I was preaching, he passed away. We prayed for him at the opening, and again at the close of that service; but he was gone before we got through. Three of the ushers have been taken away since I have been preaching here. When I got up here to preach this evening, I said to myself, “Perhaps it is my turn next.” But, thank God, I have an interest up yonder. I can read my title clear there. I have sought and found Christ. But on the other hand, see how people go on day by day, and year by year, and disobey the command of God. They say there is plenty of time. Why, you hear every day of wills being upset, because the man’s mind was proved not to be clear when he made the will on his death-bed. If his mind is not clear enough when he is dying to settle his little affairs here below, is that a time to repent and make provision for eternity? Is it the time, when we are racked with pain and tortured with anguish, to turn our hearts to God? Is that a time to begin to think of salvation? Is it right or honorable to give the dregs of a wasted and misspent life to God? I tell you I have not much faith in death-bed repentances. I do not limit the power and mercy of God; but I do not believe in them. If there is one out of a thousand that is saved, there are nine hundred and ninety-nine that are lost. They think that they repent then; but they are scared and terrified. It is not repentance, it is fear; when they get better, they go right back again to their wicked ways.

We cannot scare people into repentance; they must be born in, not be scared in. Let us reason for a moment. Suppose you ask the advice of a friend on the earth as to whether you had not better repent now. While I am preaching, young lady, just ask your mother sitting beside you what you had better do. Whisper to her—I'll excuse you—ask her if you had not better seek the kingdom of God now. Young lady, there is not one in the wide, wide world who loves you as your mother. Would she not advise you to accept Christ? Now just ask her. Most of those who are not Christians will advise you to seek the kingdom of God now, this very minute. If I go up yonder and ask them in heaven, every one there would tell you to seek the kingdom now. Paul for three years preached upon immediate repentance. He besought his hearers with tears to turn from their sins and be saved. "Behold, now is the accepted time." That was what he preached. Yes, I leave heaven and earth and go down to the very borders of hell, and will ask them there if it is not better to repent now. They would all with one voice answer, "Yes, yes, YES!" The only time we ever heard from that place was to have a young man implore that word might be sent to his father's house, that his brothers there might be warned against neglecting salvation. Yes; the lost ones would tell you to escape, and seek the kingdom of God, and be saved. Why, then, heaven, earth and hell all unite in warning you to seek the kingdom of God. Why will you not do it then? Why not accept Christ this very day? Just think what will become of you if you do not.

When the Lawrence Mills were on fire, a number of years ago—I don't mean on fire, but when the mill fell in; the great mill fell in, and after it had fallen in, the ruins caught fire. There was only one room left entire, and in it were three Mission Sunday-school children imprisoned. The neighbors and all hands got their shovels and picks and crowbars, and were working to set the children free. It came on night, and they had not yet reached the children. When they were near them, by some mischance a lantern broke; and the ruins caught fire. They tried to put it out; but they could not succeed. They could talk with the children, and even passed to them some hot coffee and some refreshments, and encouraged them to keep up. But, alas! the flames drew nearer and nearer to this prison. Superhuman were the efforts made to rescue the children; the men bravely fought back the flames, but the fire gained fresh strength and returned to claim its victims. Then piercing shrieks arose, when the spectators saw that the efforts of the firemen were hopeless. The children saw their fate. They then knelt down, and commenced to sing the little hymn we have all been taught in our Sunday-school days, oh, how sweet!

"Let others seek a home below,
Which flames devour and waves overflow."

The flames had now reached them; the stifling smoke began to pour into their little room; and they began to sink, one by one, upon the floor. A few moments more and the fire circled around them; and their souls were taken into the bosom of Christ. Yes; let others seek a home below if they will; but seek ye the kingdom of God with all your hearts.

When I was a young man, before I left my native town, I was at work in the field one day in company with a man, a neighbor of mine. All at once I saw him begin to weep. I asked him what the trouble was. He then told me a strange story—strange to me then, for I was not at that time a Christian. He said that his mother was a Christian when he left home to seek his fortune. When he was about starting his mother took him by the hand and spoke these parting words: “My son, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things else shall be added unto thee.” “This,” said he, “was my mother’s favorite text.” When he got into the town to which he was going he had to spend the Sabbath there. He went to church, and the minister took this very text, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God.” He thought it very strange. Well, he said he would not seek the kingdom then. He would wait until he got a start in life, until he got a farm and some money. Yet that text troubled him. Again he went to church, and to his amazement the sermon was on that very same text. He did not attend church for some time. At last he was induced again to enter the church, and behold! he heard the preacher take that very same text. He thought then it was God speaking to him, that his mother’s prayers were being answered. But he coolly, calmly and deliberately made up his mind that he would not be a Christian. “I have never heard any sermon since,” said he, “that has made any impression on me.” I was not a Christian myself then, so I didn’t know how to talk to him. The time came for me to leave home. I went to Boston, and there I became a convert. When I got to be a Christian, the first thing that came into my mind was that man. I made up my mind to try to bring him to Christ. When I came home, I mentioned the name to my mother, and asked if he was living. “Is he living?” she exclaimed. “Didn’t I write to you about him?” “Write me what?” “Why, that he had gone out of his mind and is now in the insane asylum.” When I got up there, he pointed his finger at me. Says he, “Young man, seek ye first the kingdom of God.” He had never forgotten the text. Although his mind was shattered and gone, the text was there.

My friends, do let that man speak to you. He is gone now. How much better it would have been for him to have followed his mother’s prayer. The Spirit of God may be striving with some one tonight. I may be standing here for the last time. Let me plead with you once more to seek the kingdom of God, and seek it with all your hearts.