

Worshippers — "Accepted in the Beloved."

John 4: 23

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"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4: 23).

In the gospel of John, where the Lord as "the Sent One" is intent upon revealing the glories of the Father — His Name, His Word, His love, His hand, His house — to the disciples, it is significant that the first time the Lord is mentioned as "Teacher" (John 1) a realm of affection is in view. John's two disciples followed Jesus with the desire of their hearts finding expression in the words — "Rabbi (which being interpreted signifies Teacher) where abidest Thou?" "Come and see," was the Lord's gracious response, and "They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day."

What precious unfoldings of divine love would they enjoy in the company of One whose dwelling-place was ever the bosom of the Father! The company of Jesus and the enjoyment of His precious love in sweet intimacy with Himself, would surely result (now as then) in affections suitable for fresh disclosures of the Father's love, in which He ever dwelt.

In two other instances where the Lord Jesus is seen as "Teacher" the same atmosphere prevails. In John 13, "His hour was come that He should depart out of this world *unto the Father* (this was ever the trend of His movements in John's gospel), and His faithful love to His own would so serve them that they might have part with Him. Again in John 20, Mary, from a heart filled with a yearning affection for her Lord, says to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni, which means Teacher" (New Trans.). Precious indeed is the way in which the blessed Lord would gather up those affections and direct them with His own movements *to the Father* — "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God and your God." Had He not said at Sychar's well — "the Father seeketh worshippers"?

Drawing the two disciples into the warmth and embrace of love's abode, filling the upper room with the fragrance of His personal love, and making Himself known to Mary in accents of tenderest compassion as in resurrection He calls her name "Mary" — He would thus ravish their hearts with the sweetness and preciousness of His own love to them and then lead their overflowing hearts in response to the Father Himself. This was His ultimate desire, but its full realisation awaited the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God.

When here on earth He had said to His disciples — "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth . . . He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that *the Father hath* are mine" (John 16: 12-15).

Beloved, here are riches beyond all human ken! Who can truly set a value on the riches of the Eternal God? "The riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering;" "the riches of His glory;" "the depth of riches of His wisdom and His knowledge;" "the riches of His grace;" "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;" "the *exceeding* riches of His grace;" "the riches of the glory of the mystery;" "the riches of the full assurance of understanding." Oh! the wealth, the untold wealth of the divine treasury! All centred in a glorified Christ and made available to us in the service of the Holy Spirit of God.

The greatness and wonder of this immeasurable galaxy of divine wealth is borne upon our spirits

as we meditate upon the inspired epistles of the beloved apostles. We see therein the greatness of God's thoughts expressed to us in His beloved Son — *in Him* we are beyond death, raised, seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, and above all accepted in the Beloved in God's very presence. Nor is this just abstract truth, but the love, light and glory of the Father's own realm fill our hearts and thus the Holy Spirit is free to lead us in worship to God Himself. How wonderfully blessed is our portion as the saints of God — emancipated on the one hand from that which would hinder our response to God, and enabled on the other to participate in the stream of holy worship which, led by Christ, ever ascends to the Father. "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh." Happy privilege indeed — blessed to be in the practical gain and power and joy of it!

This service of praise may be enjoyed by us at all times, for by Christ we may offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually (Hebrews 13: 15). But this privilege has been opened up to us through the precious death and rising again of our beloved Lord! How blessed then is the opportunity when together, having remembered Him in that death at the Lord's Supper, we contemplate all that has ensued for the praise and worship of our God and Father! We *remember* His dying and, knowing Him now in the glory, we share in His triumphs through infinite grace. Thus, quite distinct from our own blessing, the Spirit of God would lead us consciously into that realm of glory of which Christ is the Centre and Fulness.

The privilege of worship is most appropriate after the Supper when we contemplate the One who having descended into the depths for us, has ascended far above all heavens that He might fill all things. At such a time, with these glories before us, it is sad to find a growing tendency for ministry unsuited to the occasion, and which though good in its place, often disturbs or quenches the spirit of worship.

But as we are engaged pre-eminently with Christ, associated with Him as His brethren, and receiving fresh impressions of His glory and His love, He would lead us in spirit and in truth to the Father, before Whom our hearts must overflow in wonder, love and praise!

In this sacred realisation of God's presence, we may surely experience what the Psalmist describes as the "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore" — our souls delighting in the One who is the Source of all blessing, as well known to us in the Beloved.

Brought to know Thy Well-Beloved,
Drawn to Him in boundless grace,
Thy effulgence, love and glory
Shining in His blessed face -
We adore Thee, God and Father,
May thy Name exalted be!
Praise and worship we would render
Now as in eternity.