V.

JESUS CHRIST AT HOME.

"They said unto him, Rabbi, which is to say, being interpreted, Master, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see." — John i: 38.

THERE is something so frank and natural in this question of the two disciples of John, that it at once arrests our attention. If you see a person publicly who wins your interest and affection, your instinctive wish is that you might meet him privately, and have an interview with him at his home. Here were two persons who saw Jesus, for the first time, so far as we know, as he was walking past, when that wonderful announcement was made, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Instantly, they started to follow him. To the question what they were seeking, they answered, "Where dwellest thou?" We would like to see thee at home. We would like to converse with thee in the privacy and freedom of thine own house. "Come and see," is the Master's gracious reply; and, accepting the invitation, they came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day.
This experience of the earliest disciples of Jesus is the experience of the latest. To see Christ with the look of faith is not enough; we want to talk with him in the intercourse of love. To look upon him as the Lamb of God that takes away our sins, is not sufficient; we wish to know him as the friend of sinners, to sit at his table, and to listen to the gracious words that proceed out of his mouth. And this privilege is granted just as readily as the other.

Let us consider, then, from these words, first, the disciples' question, and, secondly, the Master's answer.

I. The disciples' question, "Where dwellest thou?"

We feel that we do not know a person till we know where he lives, and have seen him at his home. Personality and locality are the two great first conditions of knowledge. "Who is this man?" and "Where does he live?" are the questions which must be settled before we can consider ourselves really acquainted with any one. Hence, the doctrine of the divine omnipresence alone never satisfies us. We feel lonely and desolate in the everywhereness of God. The humblest fireside is more to us than all the infinite space of the heavens; and so to tell us where Christ's home is, is worth more to us than the knowledge that he fills all
space with his presence, and is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." I remember what an impression of dreariness and homesickness it used to give, when thousands of miles out at sea, to find that there was not a single object by which to fix our location. A jutting rock, or a lonely island, would have instantly relieved the mind, by suggesting the idea of place and locality; but to see nothing for days or weeks but the vast, monotonous desert of waters, seemed like living in infinite vacancy. So eternity seems to me, without the thought of some local home; so the omnipresence of God seems to me, without the thought of some definite place of abode. And I wonder not, that after Job's three friends had uttered their lofty sayings about the infinity and omnipresence of God: "Canst thou, by searching, find out God; canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" . . . "Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven"—I wonder not, that after all this, Job, like a homesick child, should have cried, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat." Place and a local habitation are just as necessary to finite beings as eternity is to the Infinite. And if God is so great that "the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," man is also so small that the
heaven of heavens is too large for him, and he
would be eternally homesick were it not for the
"place" that Christ has gone to prepare for him.

So, then, this question of the text is one of the
most natural and instinctive that we can possibly
ask. And how much deeper significance it has
now than it had in the mouth of those who first
uttered it. Christ has been upon this earth of
ours, but not to tarry. He was a stranger here,
not a resident. And considering the brevity of
his sojourn in the world—his pilgrimage so tran-
sient in its character and so short in its duration—
there is an exquisite fitness in the repeated refer-
ence to his earthly life as a visit.—"God hath
visited and redeemed his people."—"The dayspring
from on high hath visited us."—And now
that he is gone away we take up the disciples'
question, and press it with intensest eagerness:
"Master, where dwellest thou?"

And I wish you to notice how careful the New
Testament is to answer this question. If we desire
to know where Christ is to-day, we need be in no
possible doubt where to find him. Not only was
his departure from earth carefully chronicled, but
his arrival in heaven was announced with equal
definiteness. "He was received up into heaven,"
says Mark,—that tells of his exit from the earth,
—"and sat on the right hand of God"—that
fixes his arrival in heaven. "And while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight," says Luke — that describes his disappearance from human vision. "When he had by himself purged our sins," says Paul, "he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," — that determines his appearance and locality in heaven. And how explicit the word of God is in this matter is seen in the fact that this statement of Christ's being seated at God's right hand is repeated in more than a score of passages. In the Apocalypse the Master himself speaks to us and tells us that, having overcome, he is "set down with his Father on his throne." Now, a throne means a seat. It is the very synonym for a definite locality. If one is journeying we do not know where he is. If he has reached home and seated himself in his fireside chair, we know just where to find him. So, if we were told that our risen Lord is "walking in the circuit of the heavens," it would only confuse our thoughts and send them upon a wandering and uncertain search after him whom our soul desireth. But, "seated on the throne," — that expression fixes his abode. And though we know not precisely where in the heavens God's throne is, we know that it is somewhere; that it is in some bounded and defined locality, and this is enough.

And not only that. His being seated implies
that he is "at home for visitors," — to use a household word, — ready to entertain guests, and to hear requests. This would seem to be what the two disciples wanted who are spoken of in my text. They saw Jesus walking; but there was no opportunity for familiar, confidential intercourse. They wished to see him at his house, where they could speak freely to him, and open their hearts without hurry or publicity.

And this, dear friends, is Christ's attitude to us: He is at home and seated. There is something cordial and inviting in a sitting posture. It seems to disarm timidity, and to invite approach. A stranger who wishes to speak with you, and to enlist your sympathy and help, may be afraid to approach you as he sees you standing at your desk closely occupied, or walking hurriedly through the streets on pressing business. But if, in the twilight hour, he gets sight of you through your window, seated quietly at your fireside, "Now," he will say, "is my opportunity; now I may speak to him." And, as human instincts are always the same, I can understand why, as Jesus was sitting, publicans and sinners drew near to him, and why "when he was set his disciples came unto him" to be taught. And I can understand also why the Holy Ghost is so careful to tell us again and again that Christ is now "seated at
the right hand of God." It means that he is in the place of power unquestionably. But it means more than that; it means that he is in the reception-room of everlasting mercy; in the audience chamber of grace and intercession. There he sits forever to receive the applicants for pardon, and to speak in the old familiar tones of mercy and compassion to those that come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to sit down in the kingdom of God. "Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear him," is the touching language with which the parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son open. And it is most significant to me that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, after saying, "But this man, after he had offered, one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God," should then add, "Therefore let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Stand back, ye holy angels by the throne, who have never sinned, and therefore have no need of the blood of sprinkling! Stand back, ye self-righteous men, who say you have no sin, and so despise the sacrifice once offered! Make room for the publicans and sinners, who come to him that is sitting here, that they may get pardon and remission! They will be welcome, though angels were put off to grant them room; they will be welcome, though all the hosta
and hierarchies of heaven were thrust aside to give them audience. "I suppose," said a little child, with the wise simplicity that reasons so much about great questions, — "I suppose that if I were to go to heaven I should not get a chance to speak with Jesus for a long, long time, there would be so many great and good people who would wish to talk with him before I could have an opportunity." Oh, yes, you would, child! The child that has sins to be forgiven, and a heart to be washed and made white, will be received before the angels that come to offer praise. The ranks of cherubim and seraphim, that rise tier above tier about the throne, must make way for the poor publican, smiting on his breast, and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" for the first and highest work in which Christ is employed in heaven is to give repentance and the remission of sins.

Take courage, therefore, O sinner! who art afraid to come to Christ, not knowing whether he will receive you. He who sat upon the stones of Jacob's well and talked with the woman of Samaria about the water of life, of which if a man drink he shall never thirst, is seated now upon the throne of heaven; and there is "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb;" and he that sitteth
on the throne says, "And let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."

Thus I have emphasized this great fact that Christ is dwelling in a fixed and well-defined place; that he is always and fully accessible there to all who will come to him for grace. I think this truth is of vast importance. Men cannot pray into the air. They cannot worship towards the vague immensity. It may do well enough for schoolmen and philosophers to tell us that the home of God is "a circle, whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." But there is nothing inviting or attractive to us in such a home as that. The soul's cry is, "Where dwellest thou?" And I bless God, who has not hidden his presence-chamber from us, that I can tell you, first, that Christ lives as a real person, with a form the same as that he wore on earth,—the same face, the same features, the same nail-pierced hands; and, secondly, that he lives in a real place, just as definitely fixed and bounded as Boston or London.

To make this fact as real and as practical as possible, let us suppose that Christ were located to-day in the city of Jerusalem, and that telegraphic lines were established between that city and every city and town and village in the world. And suppose, farther, that he were to send out a procla-
mation that he would answer any request that should be sent for healing the sick, for pardoning the penitent, for helping the troubled, for relieving the poor. Imagine this to be a real fact, and the wonderful advances of science make it easy to conceive. What a scene would be witnessed!—messages flashing with lightning swiftness from every part of the globe; answers returning with instant despatch, and, as a consequence, sorrow and sin and sickness and poverty disappearing at the word of Jesus. Wonderful scene! you say. Yes; and it is real. Christ is in Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem above, which is just as definite a place as that in Palestine. His proclamation has gone out, "Ask what you will, and it shall be done for you." The telegraph has been strung to the ends of the earth,—the telegraph of prayer. I pray you now to believe it and make it real. Do you want eternal life this morning? Christ is at home to grant it. Send up your message. "O Son of God, I believe that thou art the Saviour of the world, and I now take thee for my Saviour;" and quick as thought you may find the answer recorded for you on the key-board of Scripture: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Oh that this were real to all of us! Then we should pray no longer with vague and aimless vision; then we should direct the eye of faith
no longer into spiritual vacancy. We should be “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Behold him there, if you have asked, “Where dwellest thou?” Rest and rivet the eye of faith, and say, with all confidence, “I confess thee, O Christ, as my Saviour, and I believe in my heart that God hath raised thee from the dead;” therefore, according to thy promise, I know I am saved. Forget not where to find him for whom your soul longs. By his Spirit he dwells within us; but in his glorified body, as living intercessor and advocate with God, he is at the right hand of the Father.

II. Let us consider, secondly, Christ’s answer: “Come and see.”

It is not only our privilege to know where Christ is, but to be where he is. He is in a place, and he designs that that place shall be our place also. “I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am there ye may be also.”

Now, next to the question “Where dwellest thou?” Perhaps we press most eagerly the question, “What are the character and glory of that place?” Hence, what eager conjecture, what ardent anticipations, what indefinable longings,
to know concerning the abode which Christ has fixed as the home of his disciples! And yet he does not describe it; he gives no definite hint concerning it. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love him." It is simply impossible, in our present state, to apprehend these things. For the eye of the flesh has no retina fine enough to catch and hold the image of the heavenly beauty. The ear of the body has no sense of hearing acute enough to register the sounds of glory. Paul, caught up into glory, tells us that he "heard unspeakable things which it is not lawful to utter." In that entranced and enraptured state he could hear the celestial things, but he could not translate them into the coarser dialect of sense, into the ruder speech of earth. This is a fact, I believe, that pertains to all spiritual experiences: they cannot be described; they can only be known by being realized. Hence the Master meets our eager inquiries about our future dwelling-place with only this brief and significant invitation: "Come and see."

True seeing will only be realized when we have come and known all by actual experience. For sight is a kind of mother-tongue to all the senses, and every other faculty is simply engaged
in translating its experiences into her language. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is gracious!" says the Psalmist. "Handle me and see that it is I," says the risen Christ. "Come and see," says the astonished Philip, after he had found "him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write"; as though sight, instead of being the mere external vision of an object, is in its truest sense the result of that knowledge which has been gained by those other and more intimate senses of taste and touch. Indeed, I think we can only truly see ourselves by coming to Christ. "Come and dine," said the risen Lord to Peter and the other disciples, as he showed himself to them at the sea of Tiberias. Peter had betrayed his Lord, and his heart must have been full of conflicting emotions, shame putting faith to the blush, and self-condemnation frightening love into silence.

"So when they had dined," the narrative continues, "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Why did he not ask that question before they had dined? Why did he not say, "Simon, if thou lovest me, come and dine"? Ah, I venture to think that Peter might not have come at all upon such an invitation, so self-condemned and self-distrustful was he. But when he saw that he was not excluded in the Master's invitation, and when he had sat down
with his Lord, seen those nail-pierced hands breaking the bread, heard that familiar voice saying, "Take, and eat," and looked into that face so transfigured with affection and forgiveness, then it was that he could say, with abounding affection, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

And, brethren, are any of you asking yourselves the question, "Do I love the Lord?" I say to you, in his name, "Come and see." Not by dwelling in the shadows of your own doubt and self-distrust, not by sorrowful visits to your wavering and dissatisfied heart can you find the answer to your question. Come and see Jesus, seated at the Father's right hand, showing still the wounds of your redemption in that visage so marred more than any man, and that form more than the sons of men; behold him offering himself as your advocate with the Father when you sin, inviting you to look unto him as the victor over the world for you when you are disheartened, confessing your name still before the Father and the holy angels when he might well be ashamed of you. Come and see Jesus, and behold all that he has done for you, and all he is doing for you in the place of glory where he dwelleth, and tell me then if you can help exclaiming, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee"? And lest our eyes might be

holden to the invisible presence and home of Christ, these are transferred in symbol and spirit to earth. The place of communion is a kind of border-land of glory, where Christ still meets his people, and shows "himself alive after his passion;" letting them see, in the emblems of his death and risen life, what the angels and the redeemed see literally,—his glorified body. And so, again and again, he invites us to sup with him, that by a fresh setting forth of his love our own may be kindled; and that, having dined with him, we may be able to answer his question, "Lovest thou me?" This is the universal order in God's dealings with us. We are not to come to Christ after we have seen and known him, but to come in order that we may see and know him; we are not to come to his table because we love him sufficiently; but we are to come in order that we may love him by beholding how he has loved us.

I have said that we can only see ourselves by coming to Christ. I may add also that we can only see heaven by coming to him. We speak of going to heaven to see Jesus. I think we shall have to go to Jesus in order to see heaven. It is the divine Person that gives us access to the place, and not the place to the divine Person. And unless we first have Paul's desire, "to depart and be
with Christ," I know not how any mere sentimental desire to be in heaven is ever going to be gratified.

How significantly Christ says, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The King and the kingdom are inseparably related; and unless we have come to Christ to get the life of God within us, how can we apprehend the kingdom of God without us? This is simply repeating the saying of Scripture, that "spiritual things are spiritually discerned." The horse and his rider may both gaze upon the same beautiful landscape, upon the same majestic sunset, upon the same resplendent rainbow. On the eye of the brute there is no apparent impression, while upon the eye of the man — because of the soul which is behind the eye — the impression is indescribably grand and delightful. And so the kingdom of heaven may be among us, as Christ declares that it is; its most conspicuous features may be visible in the lives of Christians, its most salient facts may be apparent in the history of the Church, but it will only be distinctly seen by such as have that spiritual vision which comes from spiritual renewal, — "Except a man be born again," — "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the

Spirit of God." Therefore it seems to me that if we expect to get any true outlook, either upon the world that now is, or the world that is to come, we must come to Christ to get it. Does the Scripture say that only the pure in heart can see God? But have you thought that only the pure in heart can see the godlike? Christians are the image of God, and it takes the same kind of vision to see the image which it does to see the original. And if you have been stumbling over God's children, because perhaps they were so peculiar, or so consecrated, or so heavenly-minded, that you could not recognize them, it is pretty evident that you would not know God if he were to be revealed to you. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not," says John; showing that just in proportion as we are ignorant of Christ shall we be ignorant of his brethren.

Applying this principle, now, to the life to come, I think we may say that all we know of our future blessed abode we have learned by looking at Christ. He has shown us heaven by showing us himself. His glorified person is the earnest and revelation of the glorified state. Hence, instead of attempting to describe to us what is unutterable, or to crowd the narrow vehicle of human speech with the eternal weight of glory, he simply lets us see himself risen and exalted.
Do we want to know what kind of bodies we shall have in the resurrection? "Handle me and see," he says; and by his repeated manifestations to his disciples before his ascension, he has given us, I believe, a better conception of the nature and capacities of the resurrection body than any mere verbal description could possibly convey. His several epiphanies are but so many object-lessons on the life to come; and in studying these we are but mastering the secret of that condition of being when we shall appear with him in glory. For to learn what Christ is in his exaltation is to learn what we shall be, since "we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Oh, what shall it be to have gotten the victory and conquered all our foes, from that first enemy which confronts us when we wake to consciousness,—our own evil heart,—to that "last enemy that shall be destroyed, which is death"! The promise is distinct that all things shall be put in subjection under us. Not yet do we see it fulfilled, "but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." One man has conquered. One who wears our nature has received the diadem of victory, and, beholding him, we behold ourselves certainly triumphant, exalted, glorified!

Such is the revelation that comes to us through the open door of heaven, and from the sight of Jesus Christ at home. What shall it be when we come into his actual presence, and see no longer "through a glass darkly," but "face to face"! "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle; neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever."