

CHRIST IN US

“[Father], I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and that I myself may be in them.”

What in heaven’s name was Jesus praying about? It’s one thing for our Lord to say he wants to make God known to us; but what does it mean for Jesus himself to be in us? To make his home in us? To take up residence in our hearts?

Robert Boyd Munger, in his book *What Jesus Says*, gives us a clue. He wrote: “One evening, I invited Jesus Christ into my heart. What an entrance he made! It was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real. Something happened at the very center of my life. “He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been stillness, and he filled the emptiness with his own loving, wonderful fellowship. I have never regretted opening the door to Christ, and I never will.

“In the joy of this new relationship I said to Jesus Christ, ‘Lord, I want this heart of mine to be yours. I want to have you settle down here and be perfectly at home. Everything I have belongs to you. Let me show you around.’ “The first room I showed him was the study—the library. In my home this room of the mind is a very small room with very thick walls. But it is a very important room. In a sense, it is the control room of the house. Jesus entered with me and looked around at the books in the bookcase, the magazines upon the table, the pictures on the walls. As I followed his gaze I became uncomfortable.

“Strangely, I had not felt self-conscious about this before, but now that Jesus was there looking at these things I was embarrassed. Some books were there that his eyes were too pure to behold. On the table were a few magazines that a Christian had no business reading. As for the pictures on the walls—the imaginations and thoughts of the mind—some of these were shameful. “Red-faced, I turned to Jesus and said, ‘Master, I know that this room needs to be cleaned up and made over. Will you help me make it what it ought to be?’

“‘Certainly!’ he said. ‘I’m glad to help you. First of all, take all the things that you are reading and looking at which are not helpful, pure, good and true, and throw them out! Now, put on the empty shelves the books of the Bible.

Fill the library with Scripture and meditate on it day and night. As for the pictures on the walls, you will have difficulty controlling these images, but I have something that will help.' He gave me a full-sized portrait of himself. 'Hang this centrally,' Jesus said, 'on the wall of your mind.' "I did, and I have discovered through the years that when my thoughts are centered upon Christ himself, his purity and power cause impure thoughts to back away. So he has helped me to bring my thoughts under control.

"From the study we went into the dining room, the room of appetites and desires. I spent a lot of time and hard work here trying to satisfy my wants. I said to him, 'This is my favorite room. I am quite sure you will be pleased with what we serve.' "Jesus seated himself at the table with me and asked, 'What is on the menu for dinner?' 'Well,' I said, 'my favorite dishes: money, academic degrees and stocks, with newspaper articles of fame and fortune as side-dishes.' These were the things I liked—Worldly items. Material things.

"When the food was placed before him, he said nothing, but I observed that he did not eat it. I said to him, 'Master, don't you care for this food? What is the trouble?' "He answered, 'I have food to eat that you do not know of. If you want food that really satisfies you, do the will of the Father. Stop seeking your own pleasures, desires and satisfaction. Seek to please God. That food will satisfy you.' "There at the table Jesus gave me a taste of the joy of doing God's will. What flavor! There is no food like it in all the world. It alone satisfies.

"From the dining room we walked into the living room. This room was intimate and comfortable. I liked it. It had a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, a sofa, and a quiet atmosphere. Jesus said, 'This is indeed a delightful room. Let us come here often. It is secluded and quiet, and we can fellowship together.

"Well, as a young Christian I was thrilled. I couldn't think of anything I would rather do than have a few minutes with Christ in close companionship. "Jesus promised, 'I will be here early every morning. Meet me here, and we will start the day together.' "So, morning after morning, I would come downstairs to the living room. Jesus would take a book of the Bible from the case. We would open it and read together. He would unfold to me the wonder of God's saving truths. My heart sang as Jesus shared the love and grace he had toward me. These were such wonderful times.

"However, little by little, under the pressure of many responsibilities, this time began to be shortened. Why, I'm not sure. I thought I was too busy to spend regular time with Christ. This was not intentional, you understand. It just happened that way. Finally, not only was the time shortened, but I began to miss days now and then. Urgent matters would crowd out the quiet times of conversation with Jesus.

“I remember one morning rushing downstairs, eager to be on my way. I passed the living room and noticed that the door was open. Looking in, I saw a fire in the fireplace and Jesus was sitting there. Suddenly in dismay I thought to myself, ‘He is my guest. I invited him into my heart! He has come as my Savior and friend, and yet I am neglecting him.’ “I stopped, turned, and hesitantly went in. With downcast glance, I said, ‘Master, forgive me. Have you been here all these mornings?’

“Yes,’ he said. “I told you I would be here every morning to meet with you. Remember, I love you. I have redeemed you at great cost. I value your fellowship. Even if you cannot keep the quiet time for your own sake, do it for mine.’ The truth that Christ desires my companionship, that he wants me to be with him and waits for me, has done more to transform my quiet time with God than any other single fact. Don’t let Christ wait alone in the living room of your heart, but every day find time when, with your Bible and in prayer, you may be together with him.

“Before long he asked, ‘Do you have a workroom in your home?’ Out in the garage of the home of my heart I had a workbench and some equipment, but I was not doing much with it. Once in a while I would play around with a few little gadgets, but I wasn’t producing anything substantial. I led him out there. He looked over the workbench and said, ‘Well, this is quite nicely furnished. What are you producing with your life for the Kingdom of God?’ He looked at one or two little toys that I had thrown together on the bench and held one up to me. ‘Is this the sort of thing you are doing for others in your Christian life?’

“Well,’ I said, ‘Lord, I know it isn’t much, and I really want to do more, but after all, I don’t seem to have the strength or skill to do more.’

“Would you like to do better?’ Jesus asked.

“Certainly,’ I replied.

“All right. Let me have your hands. Now relax in me and let my Spirit work through you. I know that you are unskilled, clumsy and awkward, but the Holy Spirit is the Master Workman, and if he controls your hands and your heart, he will work through you.’ Stepping around behind me and putting his great, strong arms under mine, Jesus held the tools in his skilled fingers and began to work through me. The more I relaxed and trusted him, the more he was able to do with my life.

“Jesus asked me if I had a rec room where I went for fun and fellowship. I was hoping he would not ask about that. There were certain associations and activities that I wanted to keep for myself.

“One evening when I was on my way out with some of my buddies, Jesus stopped me with a glance and asked, ‘Are you on your way out?’

“I replied, ‘Yes,’

“‘Good,’ he said. ‘I would like to go with you.’

“‘Oh,’ I answered rather awkwardly. ‘I don’t think, Lord Jesus, that you would really enjoy where we are going. Let’s go out together tomorrow night. Tomorrow night we will go out to a Bible class at church, but tonight I have another appointment.’

“‘I’m sorry,’ Jesus said. ‘I thought that when I came into your home, we were going to do everything together, to be close companions. I just want you to know that I am willing to go anywhere with you.’

“‘Well,’ I mumbled, slipping out the door, ‘we will go someplace together tomorrow night.’

“That evening I spent some miserable hours. I felt rotten. What kind of friend was I to Jesus, deliberately leaving him out of my life, doing things and going places that I knew very well he would not enjoy?

“When I returned home that evening, there was a light on in his room, and I went up to talk it over with him. I said, ‘Lord, I have learned my lesson. I know now that I can’t have a good time without you. From now on, we will do everything together.’ Then we went down into the rec room of my house. He transformed it. He brought new friends, new excitement, new joys. Laughter and music have been ringing through the house ever since.

“One day, I found Jesus waiting for me at the door. An arresting look was in his eye. As I entered, he said to me, ‘There is a peculiar odor in the house. Something must be dead around here. It’s upstairs. I think it’s in the hall closet.’ “As soon as he said this, I knew what he was talking about. There was a small closet up there in the hall landing, just a few feet square. In that closet, behind lock and key, I had one or two little personal things that I did not want anyone to know about. Certainly I didn’t want Christ to see them. I knew they were dead and rotting things left over from my old life. I wanted so much to keep them to myself that I was afraid to admit they were there.

“Reluctantly, I went up with Jesus, and as we mounted the stairs the odor became stronger and stronger. He pointed to the door. I was angry. That’s the only way I can put it. I had given him access to the library, the dining room, the living room, the work room and the rec room, and now he was asking about a little two-by-four closet. I said to myself, ‘This is too much. I’m not going to give him the key.’

“‘Well,’ Jesus said, reading my thoughts, ‘if you think I’m going to stay up here on the second floor with this smell, you are mistaken. I will go out on the

porch.’ Then I saw him start down the stairs.

“When one comes to know and love Christ, the worst thing that can happen is to sense him withdrawing his fellowship. I had to give in. “‘I’ll give you the key,’ I said sadly, ‘but you will have to open the closet and clean it out. I haven’t the strength to do it.’

“‘Just give me the key,’ Jesus said. ‘Permit me to take care of that closet and I will.’ “With trembling fingers I passed the key to him. He took it, walked over to the door, opened it, entered, took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there, and threw it away. Then he cleaned the closet and painted it. It was done in a moment’s time. Oh what victory and release to have those dead things out of my life!

“A thought came to me. ‘Lord, is there any chance that you would take over the management of the whole house and operate it for me as you did that closet? Would you take the responsibility to keep my life what it ought to be?’

“Jesus’ face lit up as he replied, ‘I’d love to! That is what I want to do. You cannot be a victorious Christian in your own strength. Let me do it through you and for you. That is the way. But,’ he added slowly, ‘I am just a guest. I have no authority to proceed, since the property is not mine.’

“Dropping to my knees I said, ‘Lord, you have been a guest and I have been the host. From now on I am going to be the servant. You are going to be the owner and Master.’

“Running as fast as I could to the strongbox, I took out the title deed to the house describing its assets and liabilities, location and situation. I eagerly signed the house over to him alone for time and eternity. ‘Here,’ I said, ‘here it is, all that I am and have. It is yours forever. Now, you run the house; I’ll just remain with you as a servant and friend.’ “Things are much different and so much better since Jesus Christ has settled down and has made his home in my heart.”

And that, my friends, is what Jesus yearns for as he intercedes for us with prayers to our loving Creator. Christ wants to settle down, make a home in our hearts, and transform our lives. We simply need to give Jesus the key and allow him to come in [tap chest] if his prayer for us is going to be answered. It’s a frightening thing, to allow Jesus entry into our hearts and authority over our lives. But we can never truly live for him if we don’t let him live in us. And it’s Jesus deepest yearning and most heartfelt prayer that we do just that.

“Righteous Father . . . I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and that I myself may be in them.” Amen.