

# Christ's Reception of Sinners

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Matthew Henry, the great Bible commentator, had this to say about Christ's reception of sinners. He said, "Christ was born in an inn. An inn receives all commerce and so does Christ, he hangs out the banner of love for his sign and whoever comes to him he will in no wise, cast out. Only unlike other inns, he welcomes those who come without money and without price." My message today, friends, is entitled "Christ's Reception of Sinners."

Our text is found in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 11 and verse 28, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." It is an invitation from Christ to the sinner to come and he will welcome you. Christ wants to pardon and receive sinners, that Jesus is willing for sinners to come to him for he states, "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The thief on the cross can come, the biggest sinner in your community can come. All are invited to come to Christ for the Son is willing in his reception of sinners and he casts none out that come in.

Jesus came down here so that we can go up to heaven. Jesus said, "I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of Him that sent me." Christ was on an errand, a mission to save souls, he has a warm reception of sinners. Oh friends, look at Jesus as he went about in his earthly ministry. He went from town-to-town, village-to-village wearing himself out to preach the glad tidings of the gospel. He was so tired from his incessant labors that he had to rest at the well in Samaria. He was so worn out from going from coast-to-coast that he slept soundly in a boat through a violent storm. Jesus was tireless in his efforts to invite poor sinners to come to him.

At the last day of the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood and cried out, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." Well, what is that but an invitation to come to him with his arms open wide, ready to receive every single sinner that is thirsty for him? No one is turned away, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters." Listen to his pleas to come to him, "The spirit and the Bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, Come and let him that is athirst come and whosoever will, let them drink of the water of life freely." Christ not only invites, he stands ready to receive all that come to him.

Listen to the mercy of Jesus Christ and his readiness to receive poor sinners, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon."

Did you hear those last words? He will abundantly pardon? Oh friend, his mercy and readiness to pardon you if you would only come to him but you won't come. "He is not willing that any should perish. I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, sayeth the Lord God, wherefor turn your souls and live ye."

He is willing friend, but you are unwilling to come to him. Look at the freeness of God's love for you, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." His only son, he gave his son for you, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." But you refuse to believe in him. That is, you may mentally acknowledge him but you refuse to turn your life over to him in a full surrender of yourself to him. You refuse to die so that you can live. You refuse to die to yourself, your needs, your lusts so even though the love of the Father is free and the love of Christ is clearly demonstrated in his death on the cross and the invitations of the gospel are calls of welcome to come to Christ freely without money or without price and eat, yet you do not come, you are unwilling.

Let us look at Christ's reception of sinners from God's own sworn promise as found in Ezekiel 33:11, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why would you die, O house of Israel." Oh, the goodness of God friend, in his mercy extended towards you he pleads with you to turn from your sins and repenteth towards him, have faith in Christ Jesus but you will not. You love your sins.

See how Jesus came to win souls to himself, how he came to woe you to him, how he came into the world to save you, "This is the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Oh friend, he came on a divine mission to save you but you do not want to be saved, you are unwilling to be saved. Jesus weeps tears over your not repenting and come unto him.

Look at him as he stands on the hillside looking down at the city of Jerusalem and how he bemoans the hard heartedness of sinful man in his refusal to come to Christ, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it saying, If thou hadst known even thou at least in thy day the things which belong to thy peace but now they are hid from thine eyes." He weeps, he weeps over your ignorance of him as your Redeemer. He weeps over your lack of peace because of your refusal to acknowledge him as Lord of your life and come to him in glad submission, to come and throw down your shotgun of rebellion and surrender to the king of Kings. He is ready to receive you, dear friend, won't you come to him? Won't you come? You won't because you are unwilling, you are blind to your own condition.

George Whitfield, the great British evangelist, once described the sinner in this way, he likened him to a poor blind beggar who walks along a dangerous road with his cane and little dog beside him. The poor blind beggar comes to a precipice where he totters and he loses his cane and his little dog deserts him. And there the poor blind beggar stands ready to fall to his death and die in his sins. You are blind friend, blind to your sins, blind to the free grace of God, blind to the mercy of God. Not only blind but deaf, deaf to the calls of God to come to him through his son Jesus Christ. Why oh why, won't you come? Why

do you not respond to the word of God and the pleas of God? This is why, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.

But listen to Jesus as he tells of his errand here on earth, “And Jesus answering said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” You have no need of him friend, because you do not realize that you are sick, you do not realize your desperate condition without God in the world. You were blinded to your perilous position outside of Christ and how you can die at any moment and perish into a Christless eternity. But Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, he came to seek and save.

Christ’s reception of sinners is a broad welcome to come to him and he will receive you. Listen to Christ’s moans and groans and broken heart over the hard heart of man who refuses to hear his voice, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem though that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings but ye would not.” Look at the tenderness of Christ’s own heart, the heart of God himself in his bemoaning the hard heart of sinful man and his refusal to come to him, how he likens himself to a mother hen gathering her chicks about her with care and love. The warnings of the prophets, the death of Christ, the invitations of the gospel, “But ye would not, ye would not,” you will not come to him. Why friend, wont you come? Christ stands ready to receive you if you will only come to him now. Christ’s reception of sinners is seen plainly throughout the scriptures, his readiness to receive you if you would only receive him. But you would not.

The abundant mercy of God should make you run to him. Look at the story of the prodigal son and how he finally came to his senses and said, “I will arise and go to my Father.” He turned from his pigpen, got up, dusted himself off and began the journey home to his Father’s house and what happens? When the father lays eyes on him he runs to him, he runs to the boy, throws his arms around his neck and kisses him with the kisses of forgiveness and the love of a father, the prodigal returned to the father. Why friend won’t you return? Why won’t you come to Christ in repentance? Why stay in your pigpen any longer? Why won’t you come?

I stand here as Christ’s own ambassador and I plead with you to come, “And now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled to God.” Oh friend, be reconciled to God through his son Jesus Christ. Why do you wait? Why don’t you come? Your sin substitute is Jesus Christ, he paid it all, he took the Father’s wrath upon him so you would not have to. Jesus died so you can live. Why won’t you come and live? Jesus says, “I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.” Christ speaks of his own willingness for you to come and have this life that is freely offered in the pleas and invitations of the gospel but you still will not come.

I would think that any sinner that heard all this would fly to God and Christ right now. That no matter how wicked you are, how sinful your are, how hard hearted you are, that

you would be melted by the love of Christ towards you. Christ makes the invitation to poor sinners. Isn't that what you are, friend, a poor sinner? Oh will you not come? What will be your excuse when you stand at the Great Judgment and give reasons for your denial of Christ, give excuses for your refusal of Christ and his pleas and offers and invitations for you to come to him? What is your motive right now not to come to Christ and bow to him and beg for mercy and grace? What is your reason that makes you unwilling to come to him?

Christ's love is a very affectionate love. He invites you to the marriage feast, he calls you to the marriage supper of the Lamb. What a banquet awaits you in glory, friend, if you would only come to him now. You can sit at God's table and sup with him for all eternity. Why, why won't you come? "Come ye to the waters, come unto me and drink," he beckons, he invites poor sinners to come to him and drink. He plainly speaks of his willingness to receive you if you will but come. He bowed heaven and earth for you, friend. He laid aside his royal robes of majesty to wear a rough hewn garment, to go to a cross and bleed and suffer and die for you.

Listen to this incident in the life of Stephen Olford. Stephen Olford would often relate the following story on Christ's reception of sinners. "Born in Africa to missionary parents, Stephen Olford grew up in the African bush in a humble little cottage. It was Christmas and young Stephen decided to sneak out of the cottage early that morning to go bag a goose for Christmas dinner. Before daylight, he left his parent's home quietly so not to awaken them. Into the darkness he walked with his rifle beneath his arm. Making his way to the gate he unlatched it but it made a squeak. He kept going into the dark bush to a distant field and a pond where he knew wild geese would be. Slowly he moved in the darkness but unfortunately his next step landed him into a treacherous bog of mire. There he was sinking in the miry bog. As he held his rifle above his head with one hand, while frantically trying to extricate himself with the other, he realized he was in grave danger and sinking to his death. But unknown to him, the native servant of his father's house was awakened by the squeak of the gate and this African had followed him in the darkness without his knowledge. There stood the African as the morning sun began to break over the field. He was attired in a colorful robe of silk which was wrapped around his naked body. Quickly, the native began to unfold his cloak about him. It unfolded into one long piece of material and as he unfolded it he reached the garment over to the desperate Stephen Olford. Stephen grabbed it and hung on for dear life as he was pulled to safety."

Dr. Olford would often relate that this action of the African was like gospel of Jesus Christ in his reception of sinners. That Jesus stepped out of the glories of heaven to come to earth to rescue lost man who was sunk in the mire of sin. And in his great mercy he unfolded his royal robe of righteousness and reached it out to us to grab hold of. Jesus saves his people from their sins. Once we acknowledge our desperate condition and need of him, Christ's welcome mat is out for all who come to him.

He gave his all to gain your heart. Why do you keep your heart from him? Oh, why is your heart so hard? Why won't you come now to the Christ who can save you? Whoever gave such an example of selfless love as Christ who gave his all for you. Do not blame

Christ and say he is unwilling. No friend, it is you who is unwilling. Do not lay blame on him that he cannot save you, he has already paid the price, the sacrifice has been made. Do not blame him for his unwillingness to receive you, it is your unwillingness to receive him. He wills but you wont. He calls but you won't listen. He says I would but you would not.

Christ weeps over you as he did over Jerusalem. Why won't you come? Will you not weep for yourself? His yoke is easy and his burden is light. His commandments are not grievous, "My yoke is easy," he says to you. Look unto him, friend. Look unto him now.

Listen to him, "I, even I am the Lord and beside me there is no Savior." Again listen to him as he declares, "I am the Lord and there is none else, there is no God beside me." Look to Jesus friend, "look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else."

All it takes is a look, friend, see the revealed Christ and come to him and surrender. You who are thirsty, you who are hungry, you who are weary, come to him now, come to him now and he will receive you. He will gladly receive you. The heart of the gospel is for the thirsty, the hungry, the weary. Come to him now.

Look and live. Look and live. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Oh friend, sell all that you have for the pearl of great price. Again, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Coming to Christ means that self is dethroned and another is enthroned there. He is altogether lovely, Jesus is altogether worthy. Worthy is the Lamb, worthy is the Lamb. Come to him friend, but you need no money for the pearl of great price. Listen to how free grace is, "Ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters and he that hath no money. Come ye buy and eat, yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Oh friend, the pearl of great price is yours for free, without price. Jesus has already paid the price, he paid your sin debt so that you can be reconciled to the Father. Jesus came down here so we can go up there.

Dear friend, I am through, I have presented and argued the case that Christ receives sinners, he has a warm reception for them. If you do not possess Christ then go to your knees. Knowing about him and having him are two entirely different things. Eternity hangs in the balance. To possess Christ means he is yours and you are his. It means you are in a vital union with a living Lord. That's salvation friends.

Listen to these promises from the word of God and the pleas from the heart of God to you. If you are without Christ, friend, I implore you to ask God to give you the grace to do what they say, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Remember those words, friend, for he will abundantly pardon all who come to him in true repentance.

Christ's reception of sinners is a fact. He will abundantly pardon. Oh friend, repent and come to him now.