

A full-page illustration of Jesus walking on water. He is depicted with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a blue tunic and a brown cloak. He has a golden halo around his head and is pointing towards the viewer with his right hand. The background is a dramatic sky with dark, swirling clouds and a bright light source breaking through at the top. The water below is dark and turbulent, with white foam from the waves. The overall mood is serene yet powerful.

*Come unto me*

JESUS OF NAZARETH

HERALD OF HOLINESS Church of the Nazarene



# R.S.V.P.

Do you remember when you received that invitation to a very important social event which began, "The presence of your company is requested . . .?"

And at the bottom were these four letters—*R.S.V.P.*

You may not have know the exact words which those letters represented, but you knew what they meant.

Authorities tell us that these are the first letters of four French words which mean "The favor of an answer is requested."

This magazine contains a number of important invitations—each one representing an exciting opportunity.

They are spiritual—not social—but behind each one is a wide-open door of welcome.

Best of all, they all come from God's Word and are over His signature.

In the truest sense they come "special delivery."



by General Superintendent  
Eugene L. Stowe

Though they do not conclude with the letters *R.S.V.P.*, all of them request "the favor of an answer."

It goes without saying that the sender of every invitation hopes for an affirmative response.

You can say no, of course.

But if President Carter were to invite you to the White House;

Or if Queen Elizabeth were to extend an invitation to tea at Buckingham Palace;

Who could refuse?

Dear reader, the invitations which are extended in these pages come from the King of Kings—the Ruler of the whole universe!

You have been afforded the high honor of His company—not for just an hour, but for all eternity.

And He invites you to make yourself right at home—not as a guest but as a member of the Family!

All the palace privileges are yours for the taking as a child of the King.

Now do you see why we're so anxious for you to respond to these gracious invitations?

Can you understand how important it is for you to say yes?

*R.S.V.P.*



# Come Unto Me

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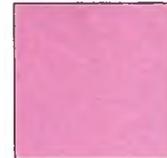


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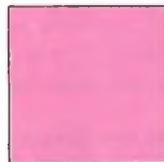
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# Come, You're on My Side



*Kids are efficient; cruel also.  
They know how to get on with the game.  
Appointed captains immediately choose  
the first few.  
At the beginning, things go well,  
but soon only the "unwanted" remain.  
Finally, the scrawny,  
rotund  
awkward and bungling  
receive careful scrutiny.  
They hear the message well.  
"Okay, we'll take you—if we must—  
but certainly not because you're wanted."  
We children of all ages are far too fragile.  
We cannot endure such crushing.  
We need words of acceptance,  
welcome,  
and affirmation.  
Fortunately, such words have been spoken,  
authoritatively.  
"COME. Be on My side.  
I have chosen you," Jesus said (John 15:16).  
Come. You're included  
and wanted.  
Come now. As you are. Quickly.  
Be one with Me.  
You're on My side.*

—JERRY D. HULL  
Nampa, Idaho



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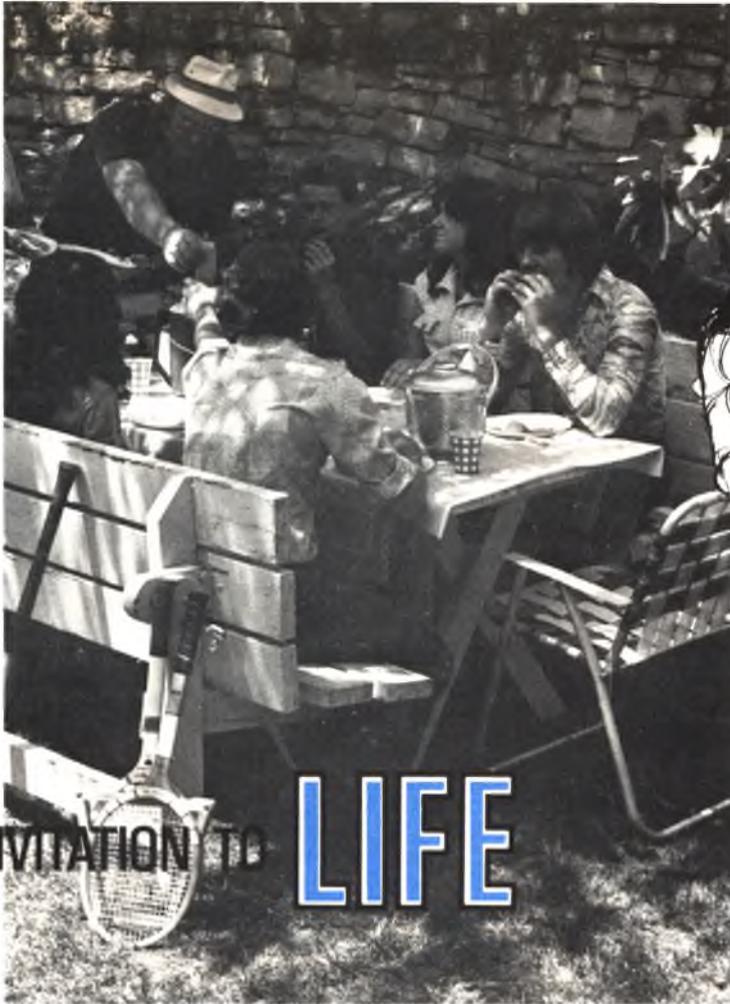
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YOUR INVITATION TO

LIFE



Dave Anderson

**T**HE BIBLE is a book of invitations. God keeps saying to people, “Come.” And when they respond, He keeps giving to them what they need most and can’t provide for themselves—life, true life, abundant life, eternal life.

Everyone wants to live, really live, not merely exist. Yet millions are dragging themselves through one meaningless day after another. They are inwardly empty and sad, although they try to cover it with frantic, almost nonstop, activities.

To them all, God says, “Come to the waters” (Isaiah 55:1). Water is used in Scripture as a symbol for life. The logic of the symbol is obvious, for without water we perish. As the body cannot live without water, so the spirit must languish and die without salvation, without “eternal life.”

The dehydrated body craves water. Every pore cries out to be refreshed and restored. There is a thirst like that for God in the human heart. The trouble is, we try to slake that thirst apart from God. We substitute our work, our play, our family, our friends, our money, our possessions, our sexuality, and even our religion for God himself. We overindulge, or we wrongfully indulge, but our glutted physical appetites leave us still inwardly athirst. It’s like trying to satisfy the body’s need for water by eating salted

peanuts! Sex, dope, drink, parties, travels—nothing satisfies, because our real need is fellowship with God. We have listened to the wrong voices, and they have betrayed us, have failed us. Now God says, “Listen, listen to me” (v. 2).

God offers life to us in Jesus Christ. Read John 4. Jesus chatted with a sinful, thirsty woman at a well. To her, He said, “Everyone who drinks this water I give him will never

thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Salvation is an artesian well!

How can we get this water of life?

The 55th chapter of Isaiah makes it clear. Three things are involved.

1) *Come to God.* God says “come to me; hear me, that your soul may live” (v. 3). And verse 6 urges, “Seek the Lord while he may be found.” It isn’t hard to come to God when you realize that He loves you, that He really wants to help you. We can come to Him as a child comes to a loving parent.

2) *Forsake your sins.* Coming to God means leaving your sins. And why not! They haven’t satisfied your thirst. They haven’t brought you life, but death. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the evil man his thoughts” (v. 7). Apart from God, our thinking and doing have been wrong—mirages instead of water.

3) *Receive His pardon.* “Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (v. 7). Freely! God himself has borne the cost. “Christ died for our sins.” “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” The price of our life is the death of Christ. To us, this eternal life is “without money and without



## YOUR INVITATION TO LIFE

cost,” as Isaiah puts it in verse 1. We receive forgiveness and life as a gift from God.

The result of this life is joy and peace: “You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace” (v. 12). Earlier in his book of prophecy, Isaiah has a similar promise: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (12:3). The joy of being right with God, of having personal fellowship with a forgiving Father, exceeds all the experiences of joy you’ve ever known before. Living for the Lord is not drudgery, it is delight.

Listen to the very last invitation in the Bible! “Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).

On a hot summer afternoon, a thirsty baseball player said, “I could drink a glass of water as long as my arm.” Are you thirsty for pardon, and peace, and joy? God will give you a drink of water as long as your life!

“Come to the waters.” You don’t have to be rich, or wise, or good. All you have to do is come in response to your thirst and God’s provision to satisfy that thirst.

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters”! □



Dave Anderson

**H**AVE YOU EVER FELT, like my friend Mack Parrish, “tired all over more than anywhere else”? Tired, not only from the struggle for bread, but tired from the struggle to find peace of mind? Are you worn out in spirit even when you are rested in body, because all your efforts to be right and do right have been frustrated by sin and guilt? Have you been trapped in the syndrome of try—fail; try harder—fail again; try even harder—fail yet again? Listen to this gracious invitation from Jesus Christ. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-29).

“Weary” of sin and “burdened” with guilt, we can find rest in Jesus. This rest is not inactivity, not the sluggish, stupid indifference to sin that some adopt, who confuse rest with sedation. Jesus says, “Take my *yoke* upon you.” This was a familiar expression in His day and among His people. When a young man was invited to study under a certain rabbi, he was taking the yoke of that teacher. He submitted his mind to be instructed, and his life to be guided, by that rabbi’s interpretation of the law of God. Jesus is saying, become My disciple, let Me be your Teacher, “learn from me.”

What the rabbis taught did not bring rest of soul. They overlaid the divine law with human traditions, until the common people could hardly name all the laws and rules, much less keep them. As Simon Peter confessed, it was “a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear” (Acts 15:10).

But Jesus promises an easy yoke and a light burden. His teachings liberate, they do not enslave. Just before He issued this invitation to rest, Jesus said, “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” To all who

“Boy, I’m just tired all over more than anywhere else.”



## YOUR INVITATION TO REST

come to Him, who take His yoke upon them, Jesus reveals the Father. He shows them what God is like, and this revelation of God brings them rest of soul and peace of mind.

What does Jesus teach about God that relieves the weary and burdened?

1) He teaches that God loves and forgives.

God is “Father,” one whose heart is compassionate toward His child, even His erring child.

In one of His best-known stories, Jesus told of a young man who left his father’s home, broke his father’s heart, and wasted his father’s gifts. It is the story of us all, for “all have sinned.” We have taken the gifts and turned our backs on the Giver. We have played God over our own lives, to our waste and sorrow. The young man ended up in a “distant country,” in a hoggpen—broke, hungry, miserable. But “he came to his senses” and hit the road for home, hoping to hire on as a servant, having blown his rights as a son. When he confessed, however, his father gave him a robe and a ring, emblems of sonship, and had a party to celebrate his return! In the story, the father is God, and the lost son is me—and you.

God doesn’t wink at sin, but He loves the sinner and delights to forgive all who repent. He lifts the burden of guilt and puts the heart at rest.

Just before His death, Jesus had a last supper with His disciples. He offered a cup of wine to them, richer in symbolism than taste, saying, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:27). And when He was dying on the Cross, pouring out His life as an offering for our sins, He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Jesus, the Son who knows and reveals the Father, shows us that God loves us too much to abandon us to our sins. He pays the price of redemption himself, making possible our forgiveness and peace.

As long as we try to earn God’s favor by keeping the Law, we fail, and become increasingly frustrated, anxious and weary. When we accept His forgiveness as a love-gift to undeserving sinners, we can be at rest.

2) Jesus teaches, also, that God cares and provides.

Because He is a loving Father, God makes himself responsible for the lives of His trusting children.

Jesus talked about food, clothes, and shelter, and insisted, “Your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”

We are not to worry and fret, therefore, but to trust and obey. If we make things our goal, we shall always be stressed and strained, either to get them or to keep them. But if our goal is to please the Father, He will provide and our minds can be at rest. “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well” (Matthew 6:25-33).

God doesn’t spoil His children, as unwise or insecure parents often do. He knows our need to be disciplined and toughened by adverse circumstances. He knows our need to be reprovved and corrected when we stray. He cares too much to let us be destroyed by our own foolishness and stubbornness. His love is not soft and indulgent, but it seeks always our highest good. “God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:10-11).

You can count on God to care for you, to provide for you in all the situations of life! This knowledge, taught and modeled by Jesus, brings rest to our souls.

Are you tired—tired of sin, tired of failure, tired of anxiety, tired of emptiness? You can “find rest”—for it isn’t far away or hard to get. What has remained hidden despite your own struggles has been revealed by Jesus. Take His yoke, learn from Him, and your heartbreaking burden will become light. Let Jesus teach you about God! □





Dave Anderson



Tom MacPherson

## YOUR INVITATION TO PARDON



None of our inventions, which have drastically changed our environment and life-style, can remove our sin and guilt.

COME NOW, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

Isaiah, one of the great prophets in Israel, *knew what sin was like*. "Your sins are like scarlet"! Scarlet was one of the deepest and most penetrating dyes used in that day to color fabrics. Once it permeated the threads, it defied every bleaching agent and process known to those ancient peoples. Humanly speaking, it was impossible to remove scarlet.

The Bible makes it clear that sin stains our entire lives. It colors every aspect of human personality. It imbues every social relationship.

God's first great judgment upon mankind, the Flood, resulted because "the Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). In thought, speech, and action, mankind was constantly and intensely wicked. We have only to read our newspapers, or consult our hearts, to know that the penetrating and corrupting power of sin is unchanged to this day.

Describing his nation in his day, Isaiah cried, "Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption" (v. 4). He likened them to a body covered from head to foot with dirty, running, unhealed sores (vv. 5-6). Even their religious life was a veneer of mechanical rituals which served as an attempted cover-up of crime and violence against oppressed and needy people (vv. 10-17). Are moral and social conditions any better in our nations?

And yet, to such wicked, guilty persons, Isaiah declares, as the spokesman for God, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"! What is humanly impossible is divinely possible.

Yes, Isaiah knew what sin was like, but *he also knew what God is like!* God hates sin, but He loves

the sinner. He cares deeply for His fallen creatures, unwilling to leave us to the awful consequences of our wrongdoing. And His power is as great as His love. He is able to forgive our sins and transform our lives, bringing a total remedy to our total illness.

"As white as snow!" One of the great sinners of the Bible uses that same figure of speech. In the biblical record, seven people are heard confessing, "I have sinned." One of them was David, king of Israel. What terrible sins stained his life—adultery, murder, and hypocrisy! God sent a prophet to smite the royal conscience and unmask his evildoing. To David's credit, he did not deny his sins, nor did he defiantly continue in them. Instead, he confessed his guilt and prayed for mercy. His contrite prayer is found in Psalm 51, where he cries out in penitence, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love . . . Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. . . . wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

So much for ancient men and their sins, for ancient prayers and promises. What about people today? When we are honest, we know that despite all the changes produced by modern science and technology, human nature is still corrupt and human behavior still wicked, just as it has always been. And none of our inventions, which have drastically changed our environment and life-style, can remove our sin and guilt. The same God calls us to account for our broken relationships to Him and to one another. And our only hope of ridding ourselves of the scarlet is the mercy and power of His forgiveness.

It is to us, and not simply to ancient Israel, that the invitation goes forth: "Come now, let us reason together . . . Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

"Let us reason together." Nothing is more *unreasonable* than continuance in sin. Sin dyes and destroys. It defies the God it cannot escape. It promises the happiness it cannot deliver. Beyond its deception and illusion is the harsh reality of guilt, brokenness, and unfulfillment. The ultimate irrationality is the sinner's rejection of God's invitation



Steve Anderson

to pardon and cleansing, for that is mankind's sole hope.

Says who? "Says the Lord"! On the highest authority, we are promised deliverance at the point of our deepest need. The invitation and the promise are carried by the Church, by concerned Christians, but they are issued by the Lord himself.

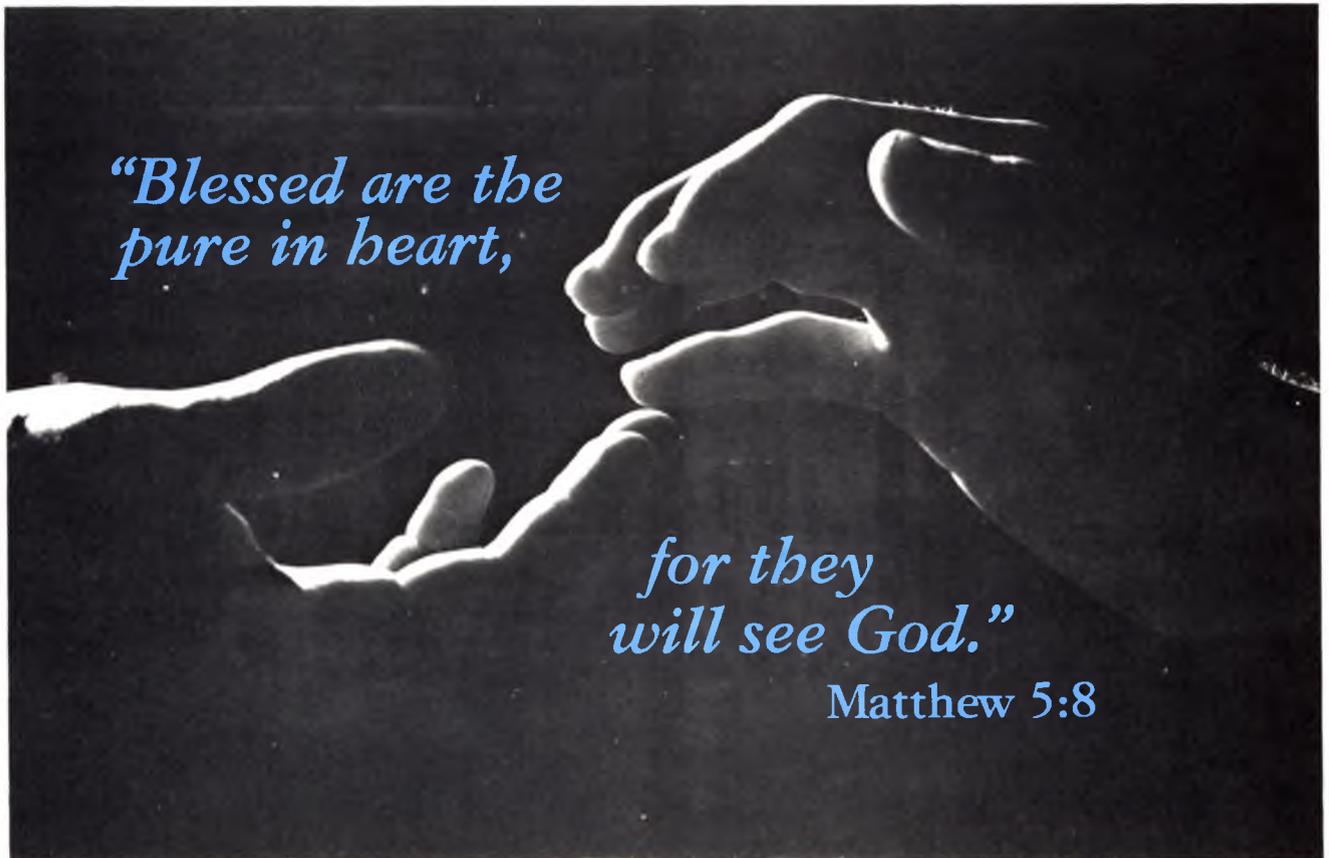
Millions have found the promise true. One of them was a prisoner in a Georgia jail. Just a youth, he was facing a long sentence for armed robbery. A pastor from a nearby Church of the Nazarene visited him, and told him of the God who changes scarlet to white. One Sunday afternoon that prisoner hushed his self-pity, quit blaming family and society for his crimes,

and took responsibility for his own life. He confessed his sins, making no excuses for them, and humbly asked the Lord to forgive his sins and change his heart. In the bleak atmosphere of that cell, the miracle of spiritual rebirth occurred. In the encouraging language of Scripture, his sins were washed away and he passed from death to life.

You don't have to be a prisoner to be condemned. An executive in his office can be just as lost and guilty as a convict on death row. The Bible says "all have sinned," and the only way to escape condemnation is to be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 1:23-24). Isaiah anticipated this free gift of pardon and renewal through Christ when he extended God's invitation to Israel—and to you and me.

An invitation creates a very radical situation, an either-or situation. You can accept or you can reject, but there's no other response possible. God invites you to receive forgiveness. Say no, and the scarlet remains, to penetrate and destroy. Say yes, and God's forgiveness liberates and cleanses, making life new and glad.

And God says, "Come *now*." You don't have to wait for anyone or anything. God is ready now to forgive. You needn't dress up for the occasion! There's no use looking for a moral tuxedo to make you presentable to God. He knows all about you. Nothing is hidden from Him. And He invites you, as you are—sinful, guilty, undeserving—to come and become a transformed person. □



*"Blessed are the  
pure in heart,*

*for they  
will see God."*

**Matthew 5:8**



# YOUR INVITATION TO HOLINESS

Dave Anderson

God demands a clean life in a dirty world, a straight life in a crooked world . . . a Christian life in a non-Christian society.

**G**OD DESIRES and demands a holy people. He could not do otherwise, because He is holy, and all His ethical demands are based upon His own nature.

In Old Testament times, God commanded His people Israel. "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). In New Testament times, He commands His people, the Church, "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15). What God is by nature, His people are to become by grace. Like God, like people. This is a necessary moral law which God will not and man cannot abolish.

If you examine the two biblical references just quoted, in their contexts, you will readily see that holiness relates to a total life-style, to a behavior pattern that is observable to others. *Total* life-style! Holiness is not simply a Sunday habit, but a way of life which includes every day and involves every relationship. Leviticus 19 imposed upon Israel a high moral standard in personal and social conduct. And 1 Peter does the same for Christians, saying, "Be holy in all you do."

Fundamental to the concept of holiness is *separation*. The Christian's life-style, his pattern of attitudes and actions, should clearly distinguish him from the prevailing culture about him. He may, indeed, have some things in common with the world, for not all aspects of culture are wrong. The Christian executive may wear the same style and color of suit as the non-Christian businessman. The Christian carpenter may carry tools and wear overalls identical

to those of a non-Christian workman. These things are incidental. But in basic attitudes toward life, and in basic responses to evil, there will be a big difference.

Here is a sample of God's Word on the subject of holiness, written by the apostle Paul:

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

"Therefore come out from them and be separate," says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty."

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

This is what it means to be holy—to cleanse ourselves from everything that defiles us physically and spiritually. And we determine what is defiling, not by the consensus of society, but by the clear teaching of the Bible. For example, secular society is now insisting that homosexuality is not defiling, but is simply an "alternative life-style." But the Bible condemns the practice of homosexuality, and for the Christian who seeks to be holy that settles the matter.

Here is God's invitation to holiness—"come out from them and be separate."

Elsewhere in his Corinthian correspondence, Paul makes it clear that he is not calling for complete

physical and social isolation from unbelievers (1 Corinthians 5:9-11). "In that case you would have to leave the world." Now this is precisely what some have done in an effort to be holy. They have isolated themselves as hermits, or in little communes of like-minded people. But Jesus taught that His followers were to be *in* the world but not *of* the world (John 17:11-20). The Church must remain in contact with the world in order to serve the world. Christians are to be "fishers of men." You can't catch fish without being where the fish are.

What is demanded by God is a clean life in a dirty world, a straight life in a crooked world—in short, a Christian life in a non-Christian society.

Is this possible? Well, not if we hear the words "come out from them and be separate" as *demand* only, and think that we have to be holy by our own resolution and strength. But if we hear these words as *invitation*, also, and realize that God makes us holy and keeps us holy, then holiness is indeed possible.

And God does promise to make His people holy! This whole section of Paul's letter begins at 6:1, where he writes, "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." It is by God's grace that we can be holy. God is a worker and helper to His people. The day we hear His call to holiness is the day of salvation. He can act *now* to cleanse our hearts and to strengthen our lives.

God knows, and we should know, that life is lived from the inside out. "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). If the life is to be holy, the heart must be pure. That our hearts can be pure is the plain teaching of Scripture. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8).

How is the Christian's heart made pure? (1) By the power of Jesus' blood as an atonement for sin' (2) by the Holy Spirit living and ruling in our hearts; (3) by faith (1 John 1:5—2:2; Acts 15:8-9). When we respond to God's invitation, coming to Him in confidence that He can and will do in us what His Word promises to us, He graciously and powerfully makes us holy in heart that we may be holy in life.

We "purify ourselves" and "perfect holiness" by committing ourselves to God in faith that claims His promises. Charles Wesley prayed:

*O for a heart to praise my God,  
A heart from sin set free,  
A heart that always feels Thy blood  
So freely shed for me!*  
*A humble, lowly, contrite heart,  
Believing, true, and clean,  
Which neither life nor death can part  
From Him that dwells within.*

God will answer the heart's cry for holiness with His cleansing and enabling grace. Holiness is God's demand, promise, and *invitation*. □



Dave Anderson

## A Special Invitation

(Matthew 11:28-30)

*Come unto Me, ye weary,  
And ye who labor long.  
I'll give you rest and comfort  
And fill your heart with song.*

*Come, take My yoke upon you.  
Relax and learn of Me,  
For I am meek and lowly,  
I'll guide and counsel thee.*

*Come, for I lighten burdens.  
Come, let Me give you peace.  
Come, for My yoke is easy,  
My mercies never cease.*

—JACK M. SCHARN  
San Diego, California

ONE of the loveliest scenes in the Gospels is found in the final chapter of John.

The risen Christ is standing on the shore of Lake Galilee. He has a fire going, over which fish and bread are cooking. To seven weary disciples, who have been fishing all night, Jesus says, "Come and have breakfast" (John 21:12). They flop down on the sand and the Lord serves them with His own hands. Conversation follows.

The whole scene is one of fellowship—men eating and chatting together in a beautiful and bracing setting.

Fellowship is one of the deepest needs of human life. Life is not fully and truly human without fellowship. A little boy attaches himself to a neighborhood gang. A man joins the Kiwanis club. A woman joins the Garden Club. These are natural expressions of the quest for fellowship. We were not meant to live as solitaries.

Jesus invites people into the most satisfying of all fellowships, fellowship with himself and with His Church. Nowhere else can the sense of belonging mean more to a person than in this family of God.

"Come and have breakfast." The homey words point to a daily and intimate fellowship. In another place, Jesus says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). What is more daily, more commonplace, than eating together? Jesus is not a Savior and Friend for emergencies only. He doesn't come just as a Guest for Sunday dinner. He wants to enter into your total life, and be part of all you are and do. He offers His accepting, forgiving, bracing, satisfying fellowship on a permanent basis.



Dave Anderson

## YOUR INVITATION TO Fellowship

The Church is called the *Body* of Christ, to which every member belongs and in which every member has a function that ministers to the whole body. The Church is also called the *household* of God, a big family where all are brothers and sisters, belonging to each other and caring for each other. These biblical figures of speech serve to inform us that the Church is not essentially an institution but a fellowship. It isn't something to join, it's someone to belong to and belong with!

The fellowship Jesus offers is a fellowship of love. When He and His disciples had finished breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Do you love me?" In fact, He asked him three times. Not long before, Simon Peter had three times denied that he was a disciple of Jesus. Now the Lord quietly probes his heart with

**C**OME, FOLLOW ME," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." These words of Jesus were spoken to Peter and Andrew, two of His first disciples (Mark 1:17). "At once they left their nets and followed him."

Peter and Andrew were fishermen, not sport fishermen but commercial fishermen. They were well acquainted with long hours and hard work. In fact, all of our Lord's first followers were called from the working classes. There was not a drone among them. The Master who called them to share His mission had labored for years as a carpenter himself. Jesus dignified manual labor by His own example, and Christianity has always regarded work as a virtue and idleness as a sin.

But work is not really better than the motive that prompts it. If a man works from selfish or wicked motives, his work is not a virtue but a curse. When Jesus toiled at the carpenter's trade, He was helping to support His family in Nazareth. He was not working merely for himself. His ultimate goal was neither pleasure, comfort, nor fame. Work becomes service when it is done for the sake of others; and it is service, not merely work, to which Jesus invited those first disciples, and to which He invites us today.

Service was a way of life for Jesus. In one of the terse sayings in which He summarized His own purpose, Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He said this to rebuke the selfish ambition of His disciples, for they quarreled about who should be the greatest in His kingdom. They wanted positions of honor. They craved status and privilege. In short, they wanted to be served. But Jesus insisted that in His kingdom the only true greatness was servanthood. That was how He lived, that was how they must live.

From fishing for fish, He called Peter and Andrew to fish for men. He invited them to share the very service He came to perform, to help bring men from

the thrice-repeated question, "Do you love me?" And each time, Peter replies, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

There was no question about Jesus' love for Peter, or for us. Love took Jesus to the Cross of Calvary, where He died for our sins, died to reconcile us unto God. He loved us before we ever thought of loving Him, and died for us before we ever considered living for Him. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)!

It is into this fellowship of mutual love that Jesus invites you.

## YOUR INVITATION TO



# SERVICE

their sins into His saving fellowship. Later He changed the figure from fishing to shepherding. "Feed my lambs." "Take care of my sheep." For men and women must not only be reached for Christ, their needs must be served as they live in this world.

Once a learned man asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The answer was, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Then Jesus told a story to illustrate what it meant to love one's neighbor, the story of the Good Samaritan. This Samaritan, in his travels, came upon a robbery victim lying in a ditch "half dead." He gave him first aid, took him to an inn, and cared for the

*(Continued on page 14)*

And it's also a fellowship of service. Each time Peter said, "I love you," the Lord responded, "Feed my lambs," "Take care of my sheep," "Feed my sheep." He gave Peter something worthwhile to do. Life isn't meaningful unless there is someone to love and something to do that is more important than life itself. Life needs *purpose* in order to have value. In fellowship with Jesus we share His own purpose, we help with His own work. He found that purpose worth living and dying for: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Nothing can give deeper meaning to our daily lives than fellowship with Jesus in service to human needs.

*(Continued on page 14)*



wounded man at his own expense. Jesus told the questioner, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:25-37). This is how Jesus would have all His followers live, compassionately and unselfishly caring for those who are broken by misfortune.

There are spiritual forms of service, and these are important. Worship and prayer and evangelism and education are forms of service addressed to the deepest needs of others. But people are more than souls to be saved and minds to be trained. They are bodies to be fed and clothed and sheltered. Christianity must be concerned about these forms of service or it denies Christ.

Jesus painted a word picture of the final judgment that is unforgettable. Before Him all nations will be gathered, and He will divide people to His right and left "as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:31-46). Those on His right hand will be welcomed into His everlasting kingdom, and those on His left hand will be driven from His presence forever. And the basis of His judgment is service: the feeding of the hungry, the clothing of the naked, the care of the sick, and the help of the prisoners!

Come, says Jesus to us all, come and help Me reach the lost and serve the needy. And if we will, life will become richer and happier for us than it could ever be otherwise. Selfish people are not happy. They live narrow, unfulfilling lives, and are the constant targets of boredom and dispeace. But people who are unselfish and Christlike, who live for others, are the ones who find joy, peace, and fulfillment in their lives. Lasting happiness is the by-product of service.

The life of service is possible to all. For some kinds of work, special skills and special training are required. Only those who possess the skills and get the training are qualified to do the work, and only they can rejoice in whatever fulfillment that work brings. But any of us can give bread to hungry people. Any of us can share our closets with those who are ill-clad. Any of us can sit by a sickbed, or give time and money and effort to help care for the sick. Any of us can tell in simple words what Jesus has done for us and means to us, and what He can do and mean for others.

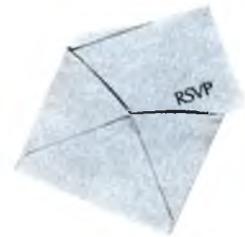
Some kinds of service may be given as Christian vocations. But there are countless services which can be rendered as avocations, whose only requisite is neither skill nor training but love.

There are two kinds of people in the world, those who are selfish and those who are unselfish, those who demand service and those who give service. And anyone who has lived long and seen much can tell you that those who live to serve are the happiest people in the world.

Very close to where you live and work and play are people with real hurts and deep needs which you

can help to relieve. Jesus invites you to come to Him and to come with Him to serve those hurting people.

A very attractive stewardess confessed to Fulton Sheen that she was unhappy and unfulfilled. He sensed the reason—a life that was turned inward upon itself. He challenged her to service, to the hard task of a missionary volunteer to a leper colony. There she became a real person and found the joy that had always before eluded her. And that is the kind of story that thousands could tell. Life is lost by hoarding it for oneself, but it is found by spending oneself for others. □



## Fellowship

Why are so many throwing their lives away on booze and drugs and crime? Why do so many break down, drop out, and even commit suicide? Because their lives have no meaning, no real purpose. They are just pushing themselves through one day after another without peace or joy.

Jesus made it clear to Peter that service can be costly. In veiled words He spoke of Peter's future imprisonment and death (vv. 18-19). Just as love and service had cost Jesus His life, so it would cost the same for Peter. But even in the midst of trials and sufferings, if life is huge with purpose, the heart is fulfilled. We can endure anything as long as we can sense some purpose in our lives. Martyrs have proven this over and over throughout history. The real enemy is not suffering, but meaningless existence.

The last thing Jesus says in this Gospel is related to His return and our responsibility to follow Him until we die or He comes again. Jesus is coming again. History does have meaning in spite of all human cruelty and blunders and death. And the great purpose of life is to live and serve in the fellowship of Jesus until He brings history to its close and gathers His people to heaven.

"Come and have breakfast!" Come and enter into fellowship with Jesus. Come and find love and warmth and meaning. Come and be part of a family that will live forever. Come and give yourself to the most significant work going on in the world today. This is what Jesus invites you to share! □

**W**HEN JESUS WAS BURIED, no one among His friends or His enemies doubted that He was dead. The ridiculous theory that He was merely unconscious did not arise until the 19th century, when it was possible to disguise stupidity as scholarship.

And when Jesus rose from the dead, none were harder to convince than His friends. Their hopes had been dashed from such lofty heights to such dismal depths that they were psychologically unfitted to believe for a moment those first flying rumors and reports that the Master was alive again.

**99 44/100 percent sure  
may be acceptable for  
soap—but, you can have  
a 100 percent guarantee  
of eternal life in Jesus.**



## **YOUR INVITATION TO ASSURANCE**

In Matthew's account of the Resurrection, the grieving women who had gone to the tomb early Sunday morning had found, not the hastily buried body of Jesus, but an empty grave. And beside it stood "an angel of the Lord," who said, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay." The women hastened from the spot, "afraid yet filled with joy," to tell His disciples (Matthew 28:5-8).

"Come and see the place where he lay." The words of the angel were an invitation to assurance. The vacant tomb proclaimed the incredible fact that Jesus really was alive. No one, friends or enemies, had any use for a dead body. His friends could not have burgled the tomb had they wished to, for it was guarded by Roman soldiers. And His enemies would not have stolen the body that seemed so surely to symbolize their triumph over One whom they had branded blasphemer and pretender.

Just as the empty tomb became, among other factors, an assurance of the Resurrection, so the Resurrection itself became the assurance of Christian faith and hope. Apart from the Resurrection, Christianity had no foundations, nor does it have even today.

The resurrection of Jesus provided assurance that His claims were true and His disciples' faith was not misplaced.

Jesus certainly made some staggering claims about His own person. The most casual reading of the Gospels makes it clear that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God in a sense that no other is or can be. And He claimed to be the world's only Savior from sin, its only way to God. These claims were made in a variety of statements and in a variety of circumstances that compelled His followers to acclaim Him as Lord and His detractors to brand Him as a liar and a lunatic.

The Resurrection vindicated His claims about His person and mission, and at the same time it reversed the verdict imposed upon Him by those who brought about His execution. That God would raise from the dead a false man is sheerly unthinkable.

Some scholars, it is true, have insisted that Jesus did not make these high claims about himself. Instead, they have been put into His mouth by His enthusiastic but misguided followers, who were so convinced that He could not be defeated by death that they deceived themselves into believing He really was alive. And they reasoned from this faith in His resurrection that He must have been more than a great leader and rabbi. He must have been the Son of God and Savior of mankind. This whole theory, however learnedly set forth, makes the Church a brilliantly creative ventriloquist and Jesus a quite ordinary dummy through which the Church speaks!

The resurrection of Jesus provides assurance that sin and death have been overcome, and that deliver-



# ASSURANCE

ance from them is now possible to all who believe on Jesus.

The Bible plainly attributes death to sin. Death is the outworking of sin, the wages of sin (James 1:15; Romans 5:12; 6:23). And Jesus as plainly taught that His death would be a “ransom” to deliver the victims of sin and death (Mark 10:45). When Jesus died, it looked for all the world as though death, and not He, had triumphed. It looked as though evil had beaten good. As He died in awful physical and mental anguish, His crucifiers mocked Him, saying, “He saved others, but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God!’” (Matthew 27:42-43). How right they *seemed*.

But God did rescue Him, not from dying but from death! And in so doing, God has declared that He is pleased with Jesus as an offering for our sins, that we can be forgiven and freed from sin for the sake of Jesus (Romans 3:21-26; 4:18-25).

And if we are delivered from sin, we shall be saved from death. His resurrection is the promise and guarantee of ours (1 Corinthians 15:20-26). We can meet death unafraid, hearing Jesus say to us, “Because I live, you also will live.”

There can be no power greater than the power that raised Jesus from the dead. There can be no life, therefore, however damaged and defeated by sin, that cannot be redeemed.

May Jensen was orphaned at the age of 2. Later she was adopted, only to suffer at age 13 the tragedy of being sexually violated by her stepfather. Later on she found work as a waitress, but in her misery began to drink, and was jailed several times. She ended up in a hospital, desperately sick, where a Christian worker found her. May was taken to Rest Cottage, a rescue home operated by our church, and there she found Christ as her personal Savior. She did not recover from her illness, but she died in peace and with hope.

“Come and see the place where he lay.” Read the record of the empty grave, hear the promise of the risen Lord, and be assured that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He can save from sin and death all who trust in Him. □



## YOUR INVITATION TO SALVATION

**J**ESUS enjoyed dinners. Rich and poor invited Him to their tables, and He seems to have been quick to say yes. In fact, His enemies called Him “a glutton and a drunkard.” The charge was false and slanderous, but it does show how much Jesus liked to be with people, sharing their food and talk.

Out of this background comes one of Jesus’ favorite figures of speech for salvation. He likens it to a banquet! The fellowship, food, and fun shared by friends at a banquet table—this is a picture of the kingdom of God. One of our Lord’s famous stories, “The Parable of the Great Banquet,” deserves to be printed here in full:

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’”

“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

“Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

“Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

“The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

“‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet’” (Luke 14:15-24).

“My *banquet*.” That’s what God calls His kingdom, His salvation. (In the Gospels the phrases “kingdom of God,” “eternal life,” and “salvation” are virtually synonymous.) This tells us something important about God—He loves us and seeks our highest welfare and joy! And it tells us something about salvation—it is filled with deep, happy satisfaction. It’s a feast of good things. Some people have the foolish notion that becoming a Christian means a grim life that you must endure but can’t

**NOW** is the time of God’s favor

**NOW** is the day of salvation

enjoy; you stick it out in order to miss hell. That is a slander on God and a total distortion of what it means to follow Jesus. The happiest people in the world are those who have been forgiven and adopted by God.

“Come, for everything is now ready.” What a beautiful invitation to a full and free salvation! God has borne the cost and spread the feast himself. All we have to do is come. This is the grand truth expressed in the best-known verse of the Bible, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” We don’t buy tickets to this banquet—God underwrites the full expense and we receive the full benefit.

Everything is ready. Think of it—you don’t have to wait another moment to be saved from your sins and to enter into fellowship with the Lord. You don’t have to spend time trying to get ready, trying to become

good enough, trying to reform and rearrange your own life first. All you have to do is come to Jesus and believe on Him. He is ready now to forgive you and to begin the happy process of remaking your life.

Everything is ready and *everyone* is invited. From the streets, the alleys, and the lanes, people of every sort are invited. God’s welcome mat is out for us all. “God loved the world,” not just elite parts of it. “Christ died for all,” not just for some. You cannot go anywhere in the world and find a person God doesn’t love or Jesus can’t save. God’s invitation list is as broad as humanity and as long as history. Your name is on it!

Eric Heiden won five gold medals for speed skating in the last winter Olympics, an unprecedented feat. The president of the United States called Heiden and invited him to dine at the White House, an honor the young athlete readily accepted. But the Lord does not invite the gifted and successful only; He invites also the “losers” and the sufferers—“the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.” There aren’t enough words in Webster’s *Dictionary* or Roget’s *Thesaurus* to adequately describe this amazing, universal love of God.

So why would anyone spurn the invitation? The story of Jesus, admittedly, contains a sad, strange note. Some of the invited guests refused to come, and “began to make excuses.” The excuses are so ridiculous that they point to some other underlying reason for the refusals. Evidently these excuse-makers did not like the host! The Bible puts it this way, “the sinful mind is hostile to God” (Romans 8:7). That anyone should not respond affirmatively to God’s saving love is a powerful commentary on the binding and blinding power of sin.

There is an unmistakable element of urgency in Jesus’ parable. The closing words are, “I tell you, not one of those men who were invited [and refused to come] will get a taste of my banquet.” Matthew Henry, an 18th-century preacher, has a crisp comment on these words: “Grace despised is grace forfeited . . . They that will not have Christ when they *may* shall not have him when they *would*. Even those that *were bidden*, if they slight the invitation, shall *be forbidden* . . .”

But if we accept the invitation, we get more than “a taste,” we get the whole banquet “from soup to nuts”! Forgiveness, cleansing, peace, joy, eternal life, fellowship with Jesus, strength for every burden, support in every trial, access to God in prayer, His presence through all our days and nights—and then the glory and beauty and joy of heaven forever! What a feast! Oscar of the Waldorf never provided a table that compares to the offer of God! “Come, for everything is now ready.”

All you bring is your appetite! God has provided the feast of salvation. □

**C**OME, let us bow down in worship" (Psalm 95:6).

These words of invitation call to the deepest instinct of the human heart.

Man is an animal, made from the same dust and subject to the same fate as other animals (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21). Yet man is more than an animal, and that which distinguishes him from the beasts is his capacity for worship. Only man builds an altar and communes with God. If he ceases to worship humbly and honestly, man reverts to beast. Indeed, he becomes capable of greater cruelty and savagery than any beast.

The call to worship, then, is a call to be truly human.

To worship is to recognize God as our *Maker*. "Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." He is not only the Creator of mankind, He is the Maker of all that exists. "The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land" (v. 5).

When we sift through all theories that account for the origins of mankind and his environment, they reduce to two—(1) God made it all; (2) it all just happened. Where men in their blindness and pride have denied God as their Maker, worship is destroyed and the spirit is atrophied. Every Communist country today bears massive testimony to the inhumanity which results in rulers and ruled when worship ceases.

By logical extension, our Maker is our *Preserver*: "He is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care" (v. 7). Worship attributes to God everything we have by which life is sustained. The worshiping heart

## YOUR INVITATION TO WORSHIP

declares that "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father" (James 1:17). The worshiping heart affirms providence, and not accidents, as the source of all that happens in our lives.

In worship, we recognize God as our *Redeemer*. He is "the Rock of our salvation" (v. 1).

In another great invitation to worship, the Psalmist says, "Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf" (Psalm 66:5). Then he speaks of the Exodus, where God redeemed Israel from bondage in Egypt: "He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the river on foot" (v. 6). The Christian's worship celebrates a greater miracle of redemption, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, by which we are liberated from the bondage and power of sin, guilt, and death! The Church cries, "Come, see what God has done," and points to Jesus, exclaiming, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

This, then, is the focus of worship—God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of human life. Grander thoughts have never stirred the minds of men, nor purer sentiments their hearts. In offering such worship, if he does it sincerely, man rises to his highest stature, achieves his noblest end.

Such worship is rendered with

joy. "Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord" (v. 1). Can anything kindle deeper joy than knowing that God, our Maker, has not abandoned us to sin and ruin, but has become our Re-

deemer at the cost of the life of His only Son?

That we, who deserve nothing but judgment, wrath and hell, are offered pardon and life eternal as the free gift of His love—how can *that* not thrust us to our knees in grateful joy? How can *that* fail to kindle our hearts and lips in songs of praise?

Yes, true worship is a joyful celebration of what God is and what He has done. In all honesty, many "worship services" are not filled with joy. Some are formal and mechanical, a mere lip-service to God that leaves the people unmoved, unchanged, and uninvolved. In many churches, there are icicles in the choir, frost in the pulpit, and snow in the pews. Some services are so cold and grim that they recall the little boy's question to his mother as he sat in church on Sunday morning: "Is this God's funeral?"

But deadness and sameness, lifeless rituals and unfeeling persons, are a caricature of real worship. This caricature becomes possible when people have not personally experienced the goodness and mercy of God. Second-hand religion never inspires.

The Psalmist who cried, "Come and see what God has done," also exclaimed in the same Psalm, "Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me" (66:16). When that which God has done *in Christ* be-

comes, through faith, what He has done *for me*, then a dimension of reality, warmth, and joy is added to worship. *Forms* of worship are invested with life and power, and people go from their worship to their work with new strength, peace, and hope.

When Scripture invites us to worship, it is this personally experienced grace of God to which it calls! We are invited to participate, by faith and with joy, in what God has done and is doing for His people.

The *meaning* of true worship, then, is this:

- The celebration of God as Creator

- The celebration of God as Redeemer

The *spirit* of true worship is this:

- Humility
- Gratitude
- Joy

And the *effect* of true worship is this:

- Life from God
- Peace with God
- Communion with God

“Come, let us bow down in worship.” Let *us*. The invitation is plural. We need to worship together. God is Maker and Redeemer of us all, and when we draw near to Him, it brings us closer to one another. Communion with

God produces healing for broken human relationships. It is the nature of sin to alienate, estrange, and divide. It is the nature of worship to unite our hearts in love. We cannot sincerely honor the Father while we despise His children. Worship is unreal, worship is pretense, unless it binds us at once to God and one another. We are not just sheep, we are a “flock” (v. 7). True worship is the cement in human relationships.

Where will you be Sunday? Unless you are “shut in” by illness or the care of those who are sick, you ought to be in the house of God, with some people of God, in heartfelt and life-structuring worship! □

## I HEARD THE VOICE OF JESUS SAY, *Come unto Me and Rest*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“Come unto Me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon My breast!”  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary, and worn, and sad;  
I found in Him a resting-place,  
And He has made me glad.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“Behold, I freely give  
The living water; thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live!”  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“I am this dark world’s Light;  
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,  
And all thy day be bright!”  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
In Him my Star, my Sun;  
And in that light of life I’ll walk  
Till trav’ling days are done.*

—HORATIUS BONAR





**I**N ONE OF HIS most searching and unforgettable teachings, Jesus drew a vivid picture of the judgment, where the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be rejected.

This judgment will occur at the return of Christ. As “the King,” He will separate the righteous and the wicked, placing the former on His right hand, the latter on His left. And to those on His right, the King will say, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

“Come . . . take your inheritance.” What a gracious invitation. It is *gracious* because it is not *earned*, it is received as a gift. True, it is given as a reward for good works, for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and caring for the sick and imprisoned (vv. 35-40). But it is *given* and not *earned*. We *owe* to God, as our Creator, and to Christ, as our Savior, the very best service we can render. And what He gives us so far exceeds what our best service deserves that all talk of “merit” is nonsense. The eternal kingdom of God is His gift. As children inherit a wealth created not by themselves but by their fathers, so do the children of the Heavenly Father.

Where good works are concerned, the Bible makes two things very clear. (1) We are not saved by our good works. God’s favor and forgiveness are not merit badges that we earn. They are freely given to us from His costly love. Look at these passages of Scripture:

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2: 8-9).

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our

Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:3-7).

Nothing could be plainer. God saves us, not because of our works, but out of sheer mercy, for the sake of Christ who died for our sins; “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:23-25). The Bible teaches, and conscience confirms, the universal sinfulness and moral bankruptcy of mankind. Our good deeds cannot cancel out our evil deeds. Salvation is possible only as a divine gift, never as a human right. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

*“Come . . .  
take your  
inheritance.”*

—Matthew 25:34

# YOUR INVITATION TO REWARD



Dave Anderson

But as firmly as Scripture insists upon the grace character of our salvation, it just as plainly teaches that (2) good works are both commanded and rewarded.

The very passage just quoted from Ephesians 2 goes on to say, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (v. 10). And the passage from Titus continues with these words, "I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. . . . Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives" (vv. 8, 14).

God expects His people to do good works, works by which the physical necessities of people's lives are provided. And this work, which flows from faith in Jesus Christ, will be rewarded.

Here are sample passages of Scripture which underscore the faithfulness and generosity of God in rewarding the life of service:

I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward (Mark 9:41).

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (Hebrews 13:16).

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them (Hebrews 6:10).

A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:7-10).

The reward for human kindness is just as sure as the law of sowing and reaping!

It is important to note the element of surprise in Jesus' story. The righteous, those who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and cared for the sick and im-

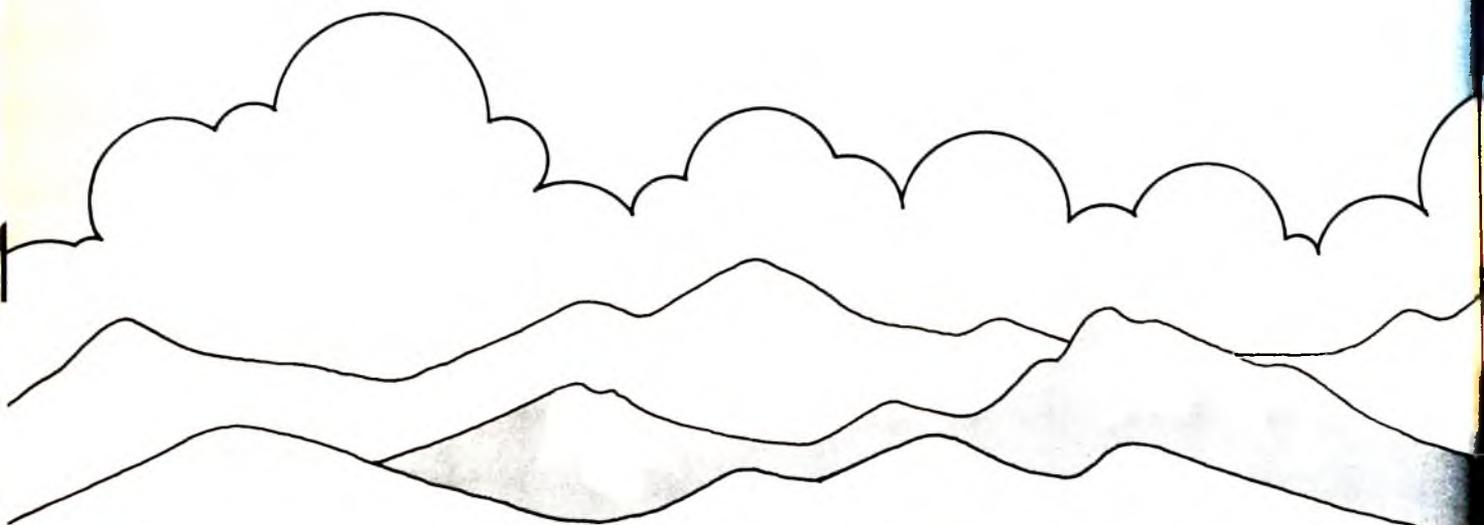
prisoned, did not realize that in doing this for others they were actually doing it to Christ (vv. 35-40). They were simply acting out of compassion, with no thought of reward. They were not professional, paternalistic "do-gooders" on an ego trip. They just cared about people, and quietly served their needs. In doing this, they demonstrated that they were children of God, because "he is kind" even "to the ungrateful and wicked" (Luke 6:35-36).

As children of the Father who does good, we can share the inheritance which He provides. The idea of an inheritance for God's people is rooted in the Old Testament. Israel's promised inheritance was the earthly land of Palestine. Moses speaks of it as "the good land the Lord your God is giving you as your inheritance" (Deuteronomy 4:21). Entering, possessing, and keeping that inheritance was conditioned upon obedience to God, an obedience in which compassionate care of the needy was a conspicuous feature. When Israel dishonored God and oppressed the helpless among them, they forfeited the inheritance and were deported as captives to Babylon (Jeremiah 5:1-31).

The New Testament indicates that heaven is the inheritance of the Church, "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4-5). This rich inheritance is the divine reward for lives of service to human need, insofar as that service springs from faith in Christ as Savior and is done for the glory of God and not for the praise of men.

"Come . . . take your inheritance"! The richness and splendor of that eternal Kingdom makes all our sacrifices and labors seem insignificant. The reward vastly outweighs the service rendered. Jesus is a generous Master indeed. □





COME, LORD JESUS • I AM COMING SOON

## YOUR INVITATION TO THE LORD

**T**HE BIBLE contains many invitations from God to people. Included are invitations to share God's life and work and home—and invitations to experience forgiveness, holiness, and peace. But the last invitation recorded in Scripture is from a man to the Lord.

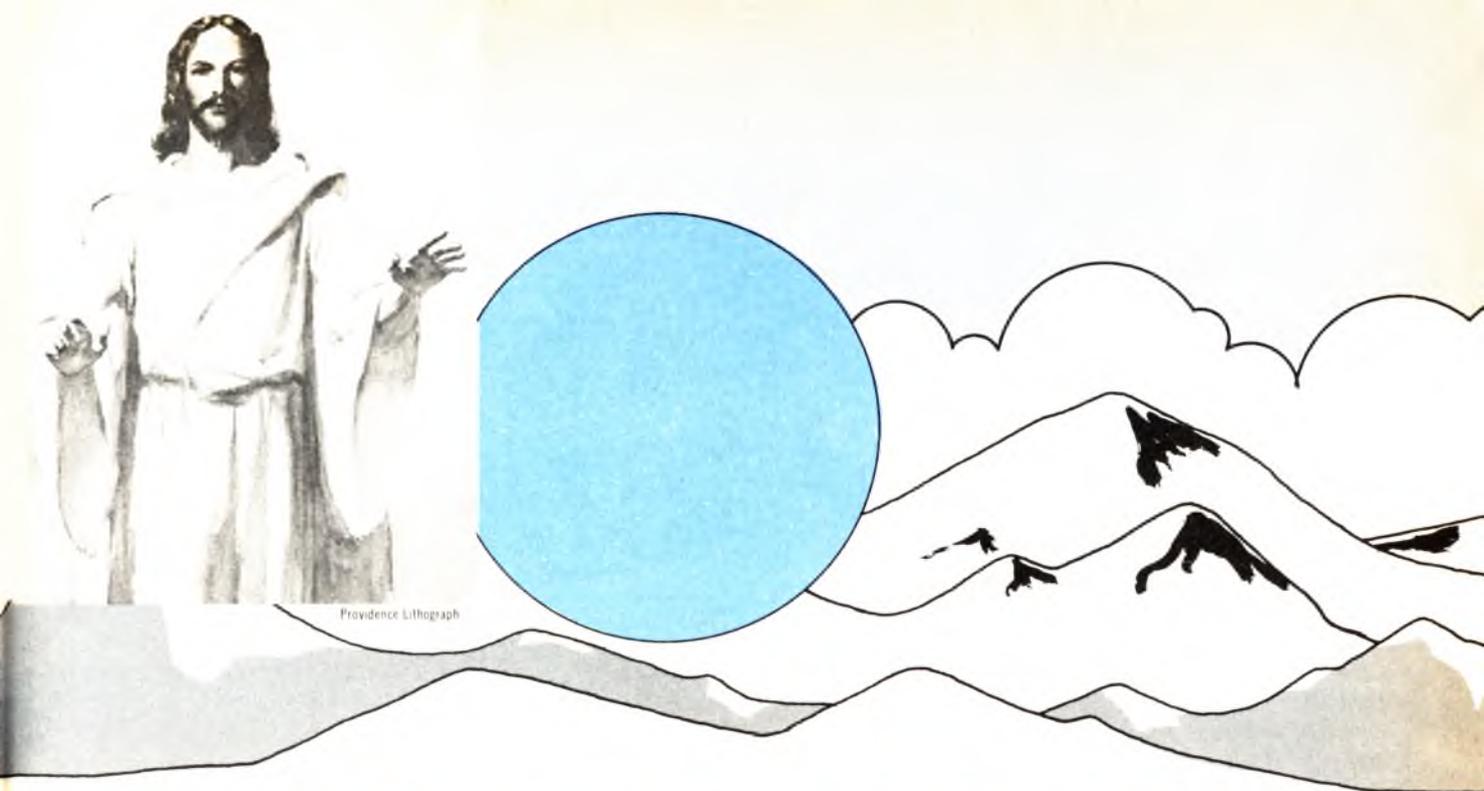
Short and simple, the invitation reads, "Come, Lord Jesus." It is found in Revelation 22:20.

Revelation is a strange book, filled with visions which are set down in highly pictorial and symbolic language.

And yet, for all our difficulty with its language Revelation is not so strange. It contains the very stuff with which human history has been crammed—wars, famine, pestilence, rising and falling empires, political convulsions, and religious persecution. In many of its lurid details, it parallels today's newspaper. Behind the visions and symbols which we find weird, there is reality with which we are all too familiar.

Revelation, though, unlike the newspaper, sees beyond the carnage and woe to the final outcome of history. The "grand finale" will be the complete triumph of the kingdom of God, the God who "makes wars cease to the ends of the earth," who "breaks the bow and shatters the spear," and "burns the chariots with fire" (Psalm 46:9).

This triumph of God is linked to the return of Jesus Christ, to what is commonly referred to as the Second Coming. The next-to-last vision in the book is of the awesome "white throne judgment," where the righteousness of God, and not the wickedness of men, has the final say. Then the last vision given to John the Revelator is a vision of "a new heaven, and a new



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# COME, LORD JESUS • I AM COMING SOON

earth.” “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (22:1-4). The new order is set forth under the symbol of a new Jerusalem, the eternal city, a perfect human society of love and light forever, where God and His people dwell in glory beyond description.

The vision of this new, golden order of righteousness and peace is followed by the promise of Jesus, “I am coming soon.” It is to this promise, and to the entire contents of this book which speaks of the wrap-up of history, that John responds in his prayer of invitation, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

John is saying, “Come, and put an end to sin and its dreadful consequences. Put an end to human suffering, to all the waste and wars and woe that has splattered the pages of history with blood and filled its years with death. Come, and usher in man’s long dream of peace and health and goodness, of universal and enduring wholeness. Come, end our brokenness and alienation, and bind us together in love, respect, and mutual enrichment. Come, and save us from the genocide and suicide to which we have driven ourselves like demons.”

All the invitations of Scripture are ultimately invitations to share in this new order of things which God will institute at the second coming of Christ. What God invites you to is, to put it into a single word, heaven.

Your past need not determine your future. The cause-effect chain of sin and death can be broken by the grace of God. You can be delivered from all that threatens you with eternal ruin. You can experience eternal life. You can enter into a fellowship

with God, through Jesus Christ, that leads at last to His “better country,” where all is good and glad forever.

When these invitations from God have been accepted, we are in a position to understand and echo the invitation of John to Jesus, “Come, Lord Jesus.” When we have invited Him into our hearts and homes as Savior and Lord, we will rejoice to invite Him back to our world, to close its tragic history and to inaugurate His perfect reign.

Last summer I knelt in prayer with a 16-year-old boy who wanted to know Jesus as a personal Savior. His simple, honest prayer was one of the best I’ve ever heard: “Lord Jesus, come and make a good home for yourself in my heart.” When Jesus makes His home in our hearts, we set our hopes on sharing His home for eternity.

One day, as Jesus was passing by, two men said to Him, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” The reply of Jesus was, “Come, and you will see.” He didn’t just give them an address, He invited them to His place. And we read, “So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him” (John 1:35-39).

It will be something like that when Jesus comes again! He will invite His people to spend the day at His house. And since, as John’s vision of heaven tells us, “There will be no more night,” we will stay with Him forever!

Jesus says, “I am coming soon.”

The Christian heart, weary of earth’s pain, death, and sorrow, and assured of heaven’s peace, life, and joy, cries out in invitation, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

What if it happened today! □



... and the milk is \$1.05. Anything else? Okay, that'll be \$16.00 even.

Perhaps you have had that all-alone feeling in the middle of noise and busyness—like the check-out line in your neighborhood supermarket.

You stand there . . .

Hoping you have enough to pay for the basket full of groceries,

Or wishing they'd open another line,

Or with your mind a million miles away.

The mechanical *whirrr* of the new computer-cash register blends with the bored price chanting of the checker and the out-of-focus stares of the other shoppers.

That's when it may come over you . . . Does anybody really care?

Leaving the parking lot and aiming your car toward home, you maneuver down familiar streets. How many times have you passed the junior high school? . . . the vacant house? . . . the church with the sign out front? Wait a minute, take another look at the message on the announcement board:

"We Care, Because He Cares"

Spend a minute or two thinking about that.

The *He* is God. And it is true. He does care. As a matter of fact *He* cares so much that *He* sent His Son Jesus to love us and to die for us.

The *We* on the sign represents those of us who make up the Church of the Nazarene. We are a group of Christians who want you to know the love of a God who cares and said, "Come unto me."

You will find our 6,500 churches throughout the world. The 600,000 of us who call ourselves Nazarenes represent a cross section of the communities

in which each church is located. Ours is a youthfully vigorous church that is growing.

There is a common denominator that unifies every congregation. It has its origin in the word *caring*. It influences almost everything we do.

And what do we do? We attempt to help men and women, boys and girls to realize their worth in God's eyes. That includes bringing all ages face-to-face with the person they can be by accepting God's loving forgiveness and the Holy Spirit's cleansing.

The family is the most important unit of people on the face of the earth. Because of this, the Church of the Nazarene provides worship, service, educational and recreational experiences tailored to the needs and interests of each family member. If you are a single, or a parent without a partner, the church cares for you, too.

Our concern reaches beyond the walls of the church building. It touches lonely people wherever they are. It goes around the world to more than 50 areas outside of North America and Britain, where 560 missionaries serve.

Your friends and neighbors at the Church of the Nazarene invite you to come and be a part of our worship and fellowship. □



*"We are debtors to every man to  
give him the gospel in the same  
measure as we have received it."*

PHINEAS F. BRESEE

Founder of the Church of the Nazarene

NAZARENE WORLD HEADQUARTERS, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI



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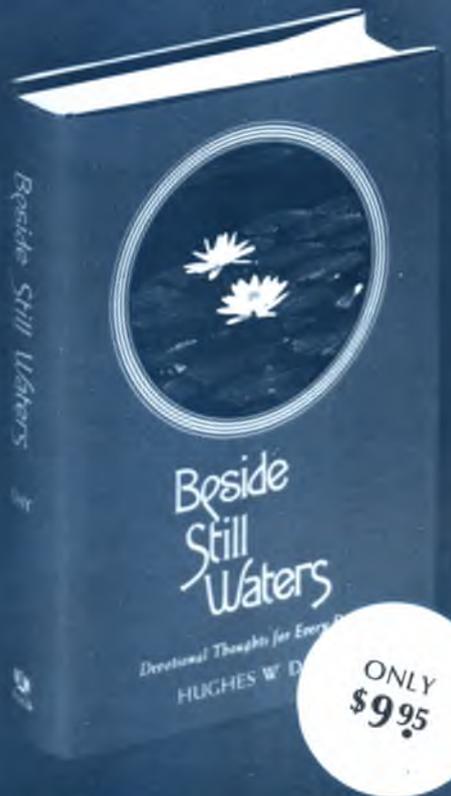
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# JESUS SAYS *Come*



## OUR HOPE AND DANGER

### **JESUS** said, *“I have come.”*

He came from eternity into history, from God to men. His mission was prompted by love and accomplished through sacrifice. He summed it up in these inspiring words, “I have come that they might have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10, NIV). He gave His life for us that He might give life to us.

### **JESUS** said, *“I will come.”*

He is coming again, to judge the world in righteousness, and to gather His people home to heaven. “I am going to prepare a place for you . . . I will come back and take you to be with me” (John 14:3, NIV). To be with Him forever, beyond sin, pain, death, and grief—this is the blessed hope of His followers.

We live between His first and second comings. We know how far in the past the first advent lies. We do not know how far in the future His second advent lies. It may occur soon!

Meanwhile, Jesus has become the world’s hope—and its danger. Through His words, preserved in the Bible and proclaimed by the Church, Jesus confronts us with invitation.

### **JESUS** said, *“Come to me.”*

Men have strayed from God and are lost in sin. In the desert of their misspent lives they are tortured by an unslaked inward thirst. Neither their works nor their play satisfies, for what their spirits crave is the life of God. Jesus invites us to that life:



“If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37, NIV). He gives “streams of living water” to all who believe on Him.

### **JESUS** said, *“You refuse to come.”*

Some hear the invitation and turn away, unwilling to leave their sins, unwilling to believe His word. They chase mirages and die of thirst. What a commentary on the blinding and binding power of sin, that Jesus offers life and some say no. “You refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:40, NIV).

### **JESUS** said, *“You cannot come.”*

Listen to His awesome words of judgement to those who refuse His invitation: You will die in your sins. Where I go, you cannot come” (John 8:21, NIV).

Will not becomes cannot. Because God’s love fails? No. Because character tends to permanence. Today’s refusal makes tomorrow’s refusal easier. We can say no to Him until our wills lack power to say yes. “I have come.” “I will come.” And between His two comings—our hope and our danger! “Come to me.” “You refuse to come.” “You cannot come.” O, my friend, accept His invitation! Do it now!

W. E. McCUMBER

RSVP