

God hath visited His people

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[0 : 0 0] And will you again turn with me to a reading in the gospel according to Luke chapter 7 and verse 16. Luke chapter 7 and verse 16.

And it came up here upon all, and it glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God has visited his people.

A great prophet is risen up among us. And God has visited his people. God has visited his people. And there was a tremendous truth in these words.

And the people who used them had convincing proof of what they said. There was always something quite unique about Jesus of Nazareth.

Something that distinguished him throughout his ministry from all other teachers. He was a true man, and yet not mere man. It was noted from the very beginning of his ministry that he spake as one having authority, and not as a scribe.

[1 : 1 1] And that was not the only quality, outstanding quality, that they detected in his utterance.

We read that they marveled. And said, Never man speak like this man. His deeds also impressed them.

He said, When the day was done, We have seen strange things today. Lo, he doeth all things well. He had come to Nain, as we read at the beginning of this chapter, and at the gate of the city, an encounter took place that made that obscure village forever famous.

For as he was entering the city, a funeral procession was making its way out.

It was a particularly sad bereavement. The central mourner had been a principal mourner on a past occasion.

[2 : 4 3] But her bereavement and the grief that arose from it on that occasion was softened, mitigated by the fact that although her husband was taken, she still had a son to whom she could look for support in her declining years.

And now that son was taken away. And she was left, as it seemed, to spend the remainder of her years in loneliness and perhaps, and indeed probably, in need.

Friends, no doubt, had gathered around her in her time of anxiety. But there are limits to what friends can do, even those with the best intentions and widest influence.

There certainly, at the best of them, could dispute with death. But here was one who could and did. Halting the procession, he commanded life to return to the dead man and his command was obeyed.

and great fear, we read, came upon them all. And they said that a great prophet had risen among us and that God has visited his people.

[4 : 1 2] We could think of no other explanation of the tremendous thing that has happened. It is a great saying and true. and it concerns us tonight as it concerns those people who heard it so long ago.

This statement that God has visited his people. Think first then of the nature of the visit. One of the first things that strikes us about this visit is that it was surprisingly unexpected.

I say surprisingly because it had long been promised and the promise had been frequently renewed. The people had never been allowed to forget that that promise had been given.

It was not the first time that God had visited his people but all the earlier visits were preparatory to this one.

He was no stranger to the Garden of Eden in the days of man's innocence and his visits there in those days must have been occasions of inexpressible joy the communion then was constant and unbroken and intimate.

[5 : 51] When the time came that man said I heard thy voice in the garden and was afraid we have the clearest hint that something something disastrous had happened.

sin had entered clouding man's mind embittering his heart leaving him afraid and uneasy in the presence of God.

It may be that Adam expected that God would never again visit Eden that the estrangement was complete and lasting.

but more likely than when he heard God's voice in the garden and that he should dread the encounter for would it not be surprising if God had overpassed man's sin and not taken any notice at all and continued to commune with man as he had always done.

It could not be so any longer. God called man to account charged him with his sin and rebellion reminded him that the wages of sin as had been foretold was death but didn't leave him in despair for it was even then that the first promise of this visit was made.

[7 : 54] God having rebuked the tempter and the tempted who had yielded to him declared that there should come of the seed of the woman one who should bruise the head of the serpent and the faithful throughout the Old Testament looked for this advent the coming of Messiah and now they said God has visited his people the second thing we note about this visit was that it was ardently longed for Jesus you may remember said to his disciples many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things that ye have seen to hear the things that ye have heard and have not seen them have not heard them Abraham had his own glimpse of this coming visitor from heaven when on

Moriah God spared his son whom he had intended on God's command to offer and sacrifice to him and Abraham saw a ram caught by his horns in a thicket and took the ram and substituted the ram for Isaac his own son Abraham said Jesus saw my day and rejoiced the sacrifices kept alive the hope of this divine visit and the godly people in Israel rejoice trust in their message they knew that those sacrifices could not of themselves take away sin but they knew that they were promissory and that the promise of God revealed in those sacrifices would undoubtedly be fulfilled with the coming of this divine visitor the son of god who was to take away the sin of the world we know too that this visit was punctually paid it seemed long delayed no doubt to those who looked for it and there were some who had been looking for it who ceased to do so hope deferred make the heart sick they began to judge god as they would judge men as one who would forget his own promise as one who would cancel his promise because of the provocations of men but god had not forgotten in the time fixed in the councils of eternity god visited his people furthermore this visit was widely proclaimed god as we have seen gave the first proclamation of it and the golden thread of divine promise ran throughout the law and the prophets on the

Emmaus road you remember Jesus reproached Cleopas and his companion because they were so slow of heart to believe and to understand what the prophets had been teaching ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory and beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded to them and all the scriptures the things concerning himself this visit was the subject of divine revelation throughout the old testament period when he came the tidings were given to high born and low born to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem to the wise men from the east to

Herod the tidings were given to all classes of people and from the beginning men were placed under obligation to proclaim that this great event had taken place Christ when he began his ministry identified himself as the promised visitor you recall that day in the synagogue of Nazareth when he availed himself of the opportunity presented to him of addressing the people he took the role of the prophet Isaiah and read that passage which said the spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted to preach liberty to the captive the opening of prisons to them that are bound and then he handed back the roll of the book to the ruler of the synagogue and made this tremendous announcement this day is this saying fulfilled in your ears as much as to say here

I am in accordance with promise he appealed to the people throughout his ministry to believe even on the evidence of his works and some did there were some who could say we have found the Messiah Rabbi thou art the son of God thou art the king of Israel my lord and my god lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word for mine eyes have seen thy salvation but that wasn't general he came unto his own and his own received him not and because he persisted in saying that he was indeed the promised visitor they nailed him to a cross but that did not overturn the purposes of

[15 : 01] God rather it fulfilled them because he came for this very purpose by his death to redeem those who were under the power of death and under the curse of God consequent upon sin he was wounded for our transgressions he was bruised for our iniquities the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed that brings us secondly to the purpose of this visit that there was a tremendous necessity behind it was obvious if men were to be saved if they were to enter upon eternal life then they would have to become acquainted with God this is life eternal said

Jesus that they might believe on thee the living and true God and on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent and that life giving knowledge of God could not be imparted to man save through Jesus Christ Christ I am the way the truth and the life no man cometh unto the father but by me it required that the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness should shine into the hearts of men to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and that's what he came to do and that's what he did he was the brightness of the father's glory the express image of his person so that he could say to

Philip he that hath seen me hath seen the father the glories of the divine attributes were revealed wondrously throughout the old testament period but never as they were in the new the love of God was indeed shown throughout the old testament period by those very sacrifices indicating God's readiness to forgive to forgive at a cost but what revelation of divine love and mercy could be compared with this God says Paul commendeth his love toward us proves his love toward us puts it beyond all question and all doubt that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us many revelations of the just wrath of

God had been seen in the old testament the fires that burned out and cleansed Sodom and Gomorrah and the country around the waters that deprived Pharaoh of his hosts the flood that cleansed the world there were many such events that proclaimed the judgment of God and that he was not a God to be trifled with but there was never such a forth putting of power as you see in Jesus Christ power to save indeed but power eventually to destroy those who reject the offer of mercy but after all there is no wrath like the wrath of the land yes there had been many revelations of his mercy throughout the

Old Testament period but they could not be compared with those under the new there for example was that woman taken in adultery they brought her to Jesus as a test case they reminded him of what the law decreed in such a case but when he answered he that is without sin let him first cast a stone at her she slunk away from his presence convicted in their own conscience and the woman was sent away with the caution sin no more does any man condemn thee she said no lord neither do I condemn thee sin no more go thy way and sin no more sin run he he it on peace no

[20 : 44] The law came by Moses indeed And there were elements of gospel in the law But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ Again by his coming He revealed perfect manhood We think of some of the saints of Holy Scripture And usually we think of them by one outstanding grace That they exhibited Abraham we for example we think of as The father of the faithful Jacob was the great pleader Job was the patient sufferer

David was the man of God's own heart Notwithstanding the many Stains That were on his record And so on But Not until Jesus came Did the world see manhood As God meant it to be All perfection Was exhibited in the character of Jesus Christ He did no sin Neither was guile found in his mouth He did nothing amiss Never man speak like this man Never man lived like this man Never man acted like this man And here was perfect humanity

In him you see Holiness In its greatest beauty But all this led To the greatest Purpose Of all Of his coming into this world He himself made Many announcements Regarding that purpose The son of man he said Came not to be ministered unto But to minister To give his life A ransom for many Again the son of man Came not to destroy men's lives But to save them Again God sent not his son Into the world To destroy the world But that the world Through him Might be saved Did not be at all surprising

If he had come to be ministered unto A person of his Outstanding and unique eminence But he girded himself with a towel And appeared amongst men As a servant Performing the lowliest services Of all It would not be surprising That he should consort With the righteous When he came For he himself was righteous Perfectly righteous And the Pharisees Who were so proud Of their righteousness Were quite sure That when Messiah came He would Choose them as his company And because he consorted With publicans and sinners They said he's no prophet And they rejected His messianic claims When they saw him going along

Through the streets of Jericho With Zacchaeus The publican They said that's the final proof He's gone to be a guest Of a man who was a publican And a sinner A man that they would never think Of honoring with their presence At his table But you see the explanation Of it all is that His business was with sinners That's what took him into the world That was what lay behind this visit He came to reveal the heart of God To a world that had gone astray And he came To make good the sinner's debt And to procure his discharge By a perfect atonement There was no other good enough To pay the price of sin He only could unlock The door of heaven And let us in The perfect days man

[25 : 58] For whom Job Longed Entered into the world In the person of Jesus Christ There is one God And one mediator Between God and man The man Christ Jesus But once more Before I conclude Let's think of The bearing of all this Upon ourselves The requirement Of this visit The obligation That it lays upon us The obligations Indeed are many We can use the plural But one is supreme We are meant of course To admire his condescension In coming For it was altogether

Undeserved And he was under No obligation To come in amongst us Save the obligation Of his own loving heart And of his covenant Engagements But his coming into the world Requires much more Of us than that That we should just Admire this Jesus As so many Even unconverted people Do Much more than that We've got to take sides About him Over yonder On George Street At this junction With Hanover Street You see a massive monument Of one of the Hanoverian kings Who visited

Who visited Scotland In 1822 George IV Royal visits were Few in those days So few that when A royal visit was made You had to commemorate it Some way To such a rare event So that massive monument Was erected To commemorate That the king Had visited Scotland What significance Attaches to it today So I may even ask you Did you know It was there Did you ever think It worth while In passing along The street To look up And say Why was it erected To inquire

Who the figure Was Whom he represented Whom that figure Represented It was an event Of passing Importance But it's not so With the visit Of this heavenly king His coming into this world Was the greatest event That ever took place In history Or that ever shall And when he went away In a sense He became more present Than ever Because he sent The spirit The holy spirit Who was to continue In the church As his representative And executor For all time Jesus Christ

Is not a king Who has had his day And gone away He's a king Who abides And whose challenge Is before us Every day He is left behind him A cross To remind us Of his sacrifice More significant Still He has left behind him A living church To witness To heaven Satisfaction With that sacrifice And to the abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit In the midst Of his people And Jesus Shall continue To reign Until Every knee Shall bow to him

[31 : 06] And every tongue Shall confess him So you see The question That confronted Pontius Pilate And that gave him So much trouble Concerns you And me tonight I hope We've already Faced it And decided wisely If not The opportunity Is given us again It may be For the last time For all we know What shall I do With Jesus Which is called The Christ God Hath visited His people God has done His part God has kept His word The son of God Came into this world To seek and to save The lost He paid the price Of our ransom He is at the right hand Of the majesty Directing all things In connection With his church Guiding her

To that eventual Uncertain victory But how does all this Bear upon us How we received him As our Lord and master Oh we like to enjoy All the benefits Of the gospel Isn't it so But we're not so keen On committing ourselves To him Who secured the benefits For us And bestows them Upon us We'd like to have Jesus with us When it comes to us To descend Into the darkness Of the valley Of the shadow Of death To be able

To take up The psalmist's song And say Yea though I walk Through the valley Of the shadow Of death I will fear No evil For thou art with me Thy rod and thy staff They comfort me We should like to have him On our side When we come before The judgment seat Of God As come we all must But what about this King In the here and now How do we stand Related to Jesus Christ Tonight Have we any reason To hope that We shall die The death of the righteous And that our last end Shall be like his If we entertain That hope Apart from the mediation Of Jesus Christ Then that hope Is illusory And will be proved false We are judged In the end As he himself Makes so clear In that picture Of judgment That he has given us On the 25th of Matthew By our attitude To him Come ye blessed

Of my father Ye ministered to me I was hungry Ye fed me I was naked And ye clothed me I was sick And in prison And ye visited me Come He inherited the kingdom Prepared for you From the foundation Of the world And those sent away From his presence Into eternal condemnation Are sent away Just because Of their attitude To him They neglected To do all those Things which he Commended in the righteous And of course At the root of it all Was their attitude To him They neglected The great salvation Even if they Didn't openly Reject it God hath visited

His people Christ is amongst us Tonight again In the preaching Of his own word How do we stand Related to him What shall we do With Jesus We've got to do Something with him There's no escaping it What shall we do With Jesus Which is called Christ Let us pray O Lord We thank thee That when we Had gone astray From thee And sinned Against thee Transgressing Thine holy law Thou didst make It so clear That thou hadst No pleasure In the death Of the wicked But that the wicked Should turn from His evil way And live And we thank thee Lord That thy Cry has followed us All down the centuries

[36 : 13] All down the years Of the history Of the church Turn ye Turn ye For why will ye die We thank thee O Lord For the effectual Call of thine Holy Spirit Which brought Wayward sinners In subjection To thy feet And pray That there may be A forth putting Of that power Tonight Wherever the gospel Has been preached Or may yet Be preached Before the day Is done Lord We pray That thou wouldst Glorify thy name In the salvation Of multitudes And make it Very manifest To this generation That thine arm Is full of power And great and might And that thou art Able to save Even unto the uttermost All who come unto thee By Christ And in him Thou shall have The praise forever Amen What elsew