

## AL Muir - Copying Christ

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J Jesus SA Dear brethren, we're glad to have the privilege again to speak to you. This has been a fine convention. The spirit has been good, the information instructive. All we have to do is digest it.

We're going to speak to you a little about Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, the man who by his own example shows us how to walk and what to do.

As you and I go through life, we meet our problems and difficulties. We come to see our own insufficiencies and the all sufficiency of Christ.

And as he moves up and down the pages of the Gospels, we see him as a man in full command of his office and work, determined to accomplish his Father's will and in the doing of it, submissive to God, and yet showing that peace and calmness of heart and mind that only one in full harmony with his Father could possess. He is to us an ideal, something to strive for. Unfortunately, we like the child at school learning to write. At least when I was one, we had a copy book with the copper plate writing at the top, and we used to copy below that.

And the first line was very good, and the second line was not quite so good. But the bottom line, you wouldn't know what we were trying to copy because we were copying the line immediately above, not the top line. Isn't this true in Christian experience? We start out as the young Christian and Christ is our ideal, and then we like brother somebody and sit to somebody else.

We begin to have our thoughts as they do, and gradually, before you know it, we become somewhat like them. We have the same favoritisms, the same differences, and so we no longer become like the copy at the top.

We want to discuss a few lessons that have helped us in the course of our Christian experience and to see how the Lord acted under various conditions.

The first instance you'll find in the second chapter of John's Gospel, where on the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.

A young couple, very much in love, but starting out in life on a shoestring, needing a little help, and the Lord's mother was apparently a friend of these young people and took quite an interest in them, and she watched the things that took place, and in the course of the celebrations, she suddenly became conscious of the fact that the supply of wine was running low, and this was not good, because at that time the wine was the thing used to infuse invigoration and excitement together with all the other connecting events.

And so she came to the Lord, who was there with the 12 but he had not entered the house. He was in the courtyard.

And when he was there, his mother came out to him and said, Mary came to Jesus in the courtyard and said, they're running short of wine in there.

And he said, woman, what is that to me? Mine hour is not yet come. But as she left the courtyard to enter the house, she passed the servants at the door and she said to them, whatever he says to you, do so. After a while the Lord called the servants.

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He pointed to six water pots that lined the wall and he said, fill these with water, and they filled them to the brim. Then he said, carry into the feast.

And they carried it in.

After a little while, the master of ceremonies became a little excited and he went to the groom and he said, now of course you knew it all, this kind of thing. But you know when you have a celebration like this, you bring out the good wine and when all get well drunk, you bring in the cheap stuff and they don't know the difference. But here you gave us the cheap stuff and you kept the good stuff to the end.

This beginning of miracles that Jesus in Cana of Galilee, the story is there for a purpose.

It was the third day. Jesus came on the fourth day of mankind's history, and on the third day there would be the marriage of the bride and bridegroom. Not this literal couple, but the marriage of Christ and the Church. They would have to have things for that day.

These six water pots, empty, represented the emptiness of the 6,000 years of the reign of sin and death. Man's achievements never left a mark so far as delivering them from the curse of sin and death. They had to be filled with the pure water, the water of truth, and once that truth was there, it could be shared out and would bring to all the blessing the new wine in the new kingdom, when the blessings of that kingdom would go out to all humanity.

Surely it cannot be that Christ today is sharing the blessings of that kingdom upon humanity here, as some seem to think.

It's very interesting to remember too that these people were conscious that they had new wine.

But if you take the MC's own statement at face value, he was saying they were well drunk on the cheap wine. How then would they know the better wine when it was given to them? If you follow his own statement that you give them first the good wine when they're drunk, they can't detect the difference with the cheap wine. Reverse the story. If they got the cheap wine, how did they know that the last wine was better?

Except for one Thing.

The wine that Christ made is not the fermented wine that we know of today. It was not the same wine that they had been drinking. The wine that he gave them would be similar to the wine prior to the flood, the wine that Noah could drink and enjoy and be perfectly at ease. But after the flood had settled and the vines began to grow, when he partook of that, he was the first drunk man in history laid out flat on the ground. Here is the statement, therefore, that the old wine that belongs to Satan's kingdom intoxicates, but the wine that Christ gives sobers a person.

Suddenly they were conscious of the difference and wanted more of the good wine, and is this not true with humanity who have been drinking the wine of Satan's empire and have become intoxicated and acted like these kind of people, as Isaiah says, reeling to and fro, they can't make a straight path. Have you ever watched a drunk man try to walk a straight line? I've seen this. It's pitiful.

But the wine that Christ shall make, and incidentally, the Lord's hour didn't come at that moment because there was still some wine available, and he wouldn't do anything lest somebody in the

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room should say, well, all he did was water this down a little thinner. It's the same stuff. He didn't do anything special.

He waited till the contents were gone, then he filled the water pots to the brim so that the servant could see this is pure water, not adulterated wine, and you read the record. The servants knew where this wine came from, but these other people didn't. So in Christ's kingdom, there will be nothing pertaining to this life carried forward into his kingdom. It will not be simply a remaking of the things of Satan's empire.

It's an entirely new deal, and it's all based upon the purity of truth, not the mixture of human ideas, inventions, and so forth. The people who drink that wine in the resurrection will realize suddenly how intoxicated they were in this life. They look back and abhor themselves for the condition through which they have come, the things that they have said in the name of God and of Christ and of the Bible, and in that day, the wine that he gives will be a tremendous blessing and a sobering effect, making them amenable to the laws and rules of that kingdom, enabling them, with the help of the Great Mediator, to walk up the highway of holiness and achieve the results of Christ's sacrifice.

No wonder that was his first miracle. No wonder it shattered forth his Coming glory. When he, as the proper king of earth, in full control, would bring about heaven upon earth.

We have another case from a slightly different standpoint. In the fifth chapter of Mark. Very touching, but showing the Lord's sympathy, his kindness, his attitude toward those who needed help. In that fifth chapter, we are told that Christ and the 12 in one of their traveling days. Surrounded by crowds of people.

More like a mob than an orderly group, apparently. They were running to and fro. Some trying to get ahead of the procession and to meet Christ coming, others lingering behind, and it was a throng, we are told, a mob, and suddenly there appeared a man, a ruler of the synagogue.

And he came to Christ.

He knelt at his feet and he said, master, my daughter is at home, sick, 12 years of age. We've tried everything.

We've attempted all kinds of means of healing her. You are our last result. Come, lay your hands upon her that she may be healed and she may live.

And the attitude of Jesus, I like Mark in some of his writings, and Jesus went with him.

Coming from the other end of the crowd was a woman suffering from a communicable disease. She had suffered 12 years, and according to Numbers 5 and the second verse. She should have been without the camp, not in contact with any human being. She ought not to have been in this position.

But here was another one in desperation, and there was a remark made concerning her. That with this disease she had gone to many doctors, and she had spent all her money.

And she wasn't any better, if not a little worse. The Bible is a very human book, isn't that true? Today you and I go to doctor. Spend all we have. What have we got left?

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Nothing much. The experiment. So here she was at her extremity. There was one thing in the back of her head. If I could but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole.

So here she was, feeling her way through the crowd, trying to get to the center where Christ was not to talk to him, but just to touch his garment.

And she had the opportunity. Instantly she was made whole.

And Christ stopped and turned around. Who touched me? And the disciples said such a question. Look at the throng of people. Everybody's touching you.

He said, no, someone touched me in faith. Who was it? And the woman, trying to make her way back where she came from. Was compelled to turn around.

She came back and kneeled at his feet and told him all the truth.

And the Lord said, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee. Go in peace.

Here you have a lesson that you and I cannot steal. Blessings from the Lord. We can't deal with him surreptitiously and try in the quietness and insignificance to get something for free. No matter what our faith is, in order to get a blessing from Christ, we have to come and confess our need and seek his blessing. Here are two people with identical problems.

They both reached the end of the road, but the ruler, he came openly in public. He kneeled before the Lord when he said what he had to say. This woman tried in the confusion to get a blessing because she felt she was in the wrong place to begin with. She should not have been among these people, and yet, if she could but touch the hem of his garment.

We used to the hem like that, you remember, that we might touch the hem of his garment, be made whole. An evangelistic hymn we used to sing many years ago.

Now, while this is going on, think of this crowd of people and this excitement, and then think for a moment what happened to the ruler of the synagogue. Here he is with a problem. He came first to Christ. He publicly sought his help, confessed his inability to do things.

And here he is standing after the Lord started to go with him. The Lord stopped because of this woman. Why did she have to come on the scene at this moment? After all, he needed the help, and he was first. Why did she have to show up and cause this delay?

What might not happen now to his daughter? Sure enough, when the Lord turned to walk with the man, two of the ruler's servants came to him, and you know, some people like to be the bearers of ill news. One of them said loudly, trouble. Not the Master anymore.

My daughter is dead.

What sort of frame of mind would he be in at that moment? Here he had come and tried the last thing that he could think of. The Master couldn't do any more for him. His daughter was dead. While she was alive, he could lay his hands upon her and he could do so much.

But now she was beyond his grasp.

Silently, he turned to follow and go home.

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Jesus reached over, put his hand on his shoulder, and he said, be not afraid, only believe.

Have you had experiences in life in which you have felt as depressed as this man? Have you had experience in which you have felt that you've been deserted and that hopeless? Have you had the Lord put his hand on your shoulder, so to speak, and say, don't be afraid, only believe?

But you know, to only believe is a very difficult thing. We sing a hymn simply trusting every day Trusting through a stormy way, and it's wonderful. But when you back Up a little. Do you know what it means to have simple trust?

Our Catholic friends are complicated trust. They go into the church and they kiss the toes and they light the candles and they do this and these and those, and then they go home. After 30 minutes they've done the job for the day. Take away all of these things, what have they got left?

Nothing. Brethren, do you and I have that simple trust? Just to believe like Abraham, to have belief, Hope against hope, when everything seemed lost, when the promises that God made to him might not be fulfilled, yet he believed, and he believed so much that he's the first man to talk about the resurrection from the dead, the oath bound covenant God made to him. He believed so thoroughly that even if Isaac should die, God will bring him back just to fulfill his promise. This is simple trust.

When they got to the house, there was great commotion going on inside. At that time people hired mourners to mourn for them, and so there would be Jews in the house. All around there would be sighing and groaning and shrieking and crying and doing all kinds of things to keep the family from thinking about death.

When the Lord entered that room, there was a sudden stillness.

And he said, what are you trying to do? The damsel is not dead, but sleepless, and they laughed him to scorn.

It doesn't show very much in the English, but in the Greek it's more emphatic that Christ with a straight face marched towards them and ejected them from the roof. It wasn't just saying, please leave. He put them out and he shut the door, and taking Peter, James and John and the father and mother, he entered the bedroom and there lay the child.

And he took her by the hand and he said, talitha Kumar daughter arrive.

And she sat straightway in the bed, and then he saw in the eyes of the parents consternation that this thing had happened, and they were unprepared for it. So he quickly said, give us something to eat. I wonder why.

And this is one of the features that is so beautiful about Christ, his compassion for our feelings. Here was a child. If he had simply raised her, brought her back to life and allowed the idea that she had been dead to prevail. That child would never have had a companion in that village. From that day on, she would have been a freak in the eyes of her companions.

And at that time they didn't come to life in a town and then a few years move off and live somewhere else. They lived in the same village where they were born all the days of their life. What kind of life would she have had? And you know who have children that in the morning it's a little difficult to get them up. So you keep telling Tommy, now you better get up, breakfast is ready.

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The bus will soon be here. You've got to get on if you can get out of here, you're going to school, and here's all the reasons why he shouldn't. But you finally prevail. So he always associates getting up in the morning with a breakfast and of course being nagged a little too.

But I mean, he gets a breakfast. So here with this child, our Lord saying, daughter, arise, and she becoming awake, would think that she had been very sick and had fallen into a deep sleep, and the great prophet had come and woke her up, and here was her father and mother giving her something to eat.

And it would make the family circle complete. At the same time, the child, not knowing anything about having been dead, would have nothing to say, and only these people outside who said she was dead. It was only their testimony. It was only what they could say about it.

And they had seen nothing. But the testimony of the parents and of the child would show a different story. This is the way the Lord deals with these people. It's the way he deals with us and tries to have compassion upon us, that we in turn might learn that same lesson of sympathy, understanding and compassion. How beautiful these things are.

In the story of the life of Christ.

We have another case in the 21st chapter of the Gospel of John, the final stage of John's writing, something he wrote about AD 96, at the end of a long life. As he looked back over his years in the service of his Lord and master. As he reviewed what Matthew, Mark and Luke had written, he fills in for us much of the detail and the blessing of the things they omitted to say. He was one who was very sympathetic with Christ. He had the spirit of the Lord.

He could lean upon the breast of Jesus.

Many things he understood without having to be told about them. But he was not the man as pictured by Leonardo da Vinci. He didn't have a woman's face. On the contrary, he and his brother James were nicknamed by Christ. Born urges, sons of thunder.

Read the record in the Gospels and you find that that exactly represents them. They were all fishermen and they had all whiskers and they were all broad chested. They were men who worked in the deep, who drew in nets containing fish. This was one of the appearances of Christ after his resurrection, and on this occasion they had toiled all night in the lake and in the early morning hours, as they looked ashore, they suddenly saw someone on the shore.

And this individual had gathered together some embers and had a fire going, and he had some fish cooking on the fire.

And on the boat they were afraid until one of them said, that's the Lord and Peter. Is it? And he jumped in the water and swam ashore, and sure enough it was.

And the Lord said to them, how many fish have you got? And they said, we've worked all nights, we haven't got one, and the Lord said, throw the net over on the other side. Well, what difference does that make? Don't the fish swim from side to side?

If you don't get them one side, how can you get them on the other? But anyway, they did it, and they hauled in the net 153 fish, and the net was not broken. One man has suggested that the 153 fish might well represent the 153 instances in which Christ, either to individuals or groups,

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performed his miracles or his personal teachings, and he was not broken down in the service.

The net didn't break. But now that they were ashore, after they had eaten of the meal, the Lord said to Peter, lovest thou me more than these? And he used the word agape, which means that intense form, that sacrificial form of love, and Peter said, thou knowest that I love thee, using philio, brotherly love.

And the Lord said, feed my lambs. Then a little later he said to Peter again, lovest thou me? Using the same word? And Peter answered, thou knowest that I love thee. Brotherly love.

And then a little while later, Jesus says to Peter, lovest thou me? And he used the word philio.

And Peter was upset. He said, lord, you know everything. You know that I love thee. This is the filial love. Why did the Lord do this to Peter?

Well, you remember that Peter was the strong man in his own estimation. Though everybody else deserved Christ, he would stay with him. He even had a sword in the garden. He had two swords. He had one.

He was going to give the other to Christ. They would fight their way out of this thing in the garden.

But yet he is the same man that on three occasions denied his Lord, first saying, I never knew him, and next saying, he had no connection with him, and then with the fisherman's oaths and curses, saying, I never knew thy man.

And the cock crew, and Peter remembered and wept in tears. Too late he had denied his Lord. So now Christ comes along to wipe out these three errors of Peter by having him profess his love for the Lord in spite of these things that seemed to be against him. That here he was voluntarily assuring Christ he loved him, even if it wasn't in the highest sense of the term, at least he loved him.

And, you know, Peter felt a little about him. He couldn't quite take why he should be selected in this matter. He didn't understand it then. So suddenly he saw John and he turns to the Lord and he says, well, now you've talked to me a good deal, but what is this man going to do? And the Lord said, if I want him to stay till I come again, what has that got to do with you?

Follow thou me. So the rumor got out then that John wouldn't die till the Lord came again. This is how rumors get started, and John adds, he says, this is entirely a mistake. What he meant was looking further down to an end.

And in that day John would have a work, and so would Peter, and you and I are to learn the lessons as represented in Peter. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. These personal touches with Christ are on the record, not for information, but in order to show us the way and that we might bear with one another in the difficulties and the confusions of our daily life, and that with this spirit of understanding, instead of being miffed at things, instead of having a stone on our shoulder waiting for someone to knock it off, instead of trying to make decisions off the cuff, the Lord wants us to do these things as he did them.

As we grow in grace and in understanding, we slow down a little. We begin to think before we speak. Peter spoke in his denials without thinking. But he spoke with some thinking when the Lord

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asked him if he loved him, and as you and I grow on these matters of grace, we begin to learn to think before we speak.

Brevity of speech is one of the finest things, and that's why James said about the tongue. The tongue weighs a few ounces, but we have a terrible time keeping control of it. It gets away from us. But if we could only have this control and find it in these examples and illustrations that are set before us.

This is how the Bible speaks to us. It tells us things in the actions of individuals. Because the Bible is nothing more or less than the book of pantomime. There isn't an experience in life that you and I have that you won't find someone or two or three people telling us what to do in that very connection.

We just had that in the story of Jonah. There are many stories of that nature throughout the Bible people who act in the very way that we may be acting and if we follow the advice that the story gives we learn how to overcome. We overcome our trials, our difficulties and we rise in the strength of the example we find in Christ. How wonderful to see him as he moves among the people, as he talks to them, as he has compassion upon them, as he endeavors to help them, giving us an example that we should follow in his steps. It's been a great privilege to be with you rejoicing in these things.

They are common property. None of us have any copyrights on these things but we have in the Lord the right to use them for our good and that through meeting with God's people we may be able to exercise some of these ideals that we study and thus ourselves grow in grace and in understanding and in the spirit of the Lord.