

The Loveliness of Christ

C.I. Scofield (1843-1921)

All other greatness has been marred by littleness; all other wisdom has been flawed by folly; all other goodness has been tainted by imperfection.

PERFECT HUMANITY

First of all, as it seems to me, this loveliness of Christ consists in His perfect humanity.

In everything but our sins, and our evil nature, He is one with us. He grew in stature and in grace. He labored, and wept, and prayed and loved. He was tempted in all points as we are – sin apart.

Beloved, there is no other who establishes with us such intimacy, who comes so close to these human hearts of ours ... He enters simply and naturally into our lives as if He had been reared on the same street with us. He is not one of the ancients; He is one of us.

How wholesomely and genuinely human He is! Martha scolds Him. John, who had seen Him raise the dead, still the tempest, and talk with Moses and Elijah on the Mount, does not hesitate to make a pillow on His breast at supper.

They ask Him foolish questions, and rebuke Him, and venerate and adore Him in one breath. And He calls them by their first names, and tells them to fear not, and assures them of His love. In all of this He is to me altogether lovely.

His perfection does not glitter; it glows. The saintliness of Jesus is so warm and human that it attracts and inspires. We find in it nothing austere and inaccessible. The beauty of His holiness reminds one rather of a rose, or a bank of violets, which warmly beckon to all who see it.

Jesus receives sinners and eats with them – all kinds of sinners such as Nicodemus, the moral, religious sinner, and Mary Magdalene, “out of whom went seven devils” – the shocking kind of sinner.

He comes into sinful lives as a bright, clear stream enters a stagnant pool. The stream is not afraid of contamination but its sweet energy cleanses the pool.

PERFECT COMPASSION

Moreover, Christ's sympathy is altogether lovely. He is always being touched with compassion. The multitude without a shepherd, the sorrowing widow of Nain, the little dead child of the ruler, the demoniac of Gadara, the hungry five thousand – all these representing suffering – whatever suffers touches Jesus' heart. His very wrath against the scribes and Pharisees is but the excess of His sympathy for those who suffered under their hard self-righteousness.

Why did He touch that poor leper? He could have healed him with a word as He did the nobleman's son. Why, for years the wretch had been an outcast, cut off from kin, dehumanized. He lost the sense of being a man. It was defilement to approach him. Well, the touch of Jesus made him human again.

PERFECT GENTLENESS

Further, Christ's gentleness is altogether lovely. It is in His way with sinners that the supreme loveliness of Jesus is most sweetly shown. How gentle He is, how faithful; how considerate, how respectful. His gentleness is never weak. His courage is never brutal.

When He speaks to that silent despairing woman, after her accusers had gone out one by one, He uses for "woman" the same word that He used when addressing His own dear mother from the cross.

Follow Him to Jacob's solitary well and hear His conversation with the woman of Samaria. How patiently He unfolds the deepest truths. He could not be more respectful to Mary of Bethany.

Even in the agonies of death, He could hear the cry of despairing faith.

PERFECT POISE

My friends, you may study these things for yourselves. Follow Him through all the scenes of outrage and insult on the night and morning of His arrest and trial. Behold Him before the high priest, before Pilate, before Herod. See Him brow-beaten, bullied, scourged, smitten upon the face, spit upon, mocked. How His inherent greatness comes out: not once does He lose His poise.

Let me ask you to follow Him still further to His crucifixion. Go with the jeering crowd without the gates; see Him stretched upon the great, rough cross and hear the dreadful sound of the sledge as the spikes are forced through His hands and feet. See, as the yelling mob falls back, the cross, bearing this gentlest, sweetest, bravest, loveliest man, upreared until it falls into the socket in the rock.

"And sitting down, they watched Him there" (Matthew 27:36).

Listen too. Hear Him ask the Father to forgive His murderers, hear all His cries from the cross.

*“When they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him.
... Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:33-34).

Is He not altogether lovely?

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(abridged)

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