**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 26 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**CENTRE AND CIRCUMFERENCE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. Face unto Me, and be ye set free, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

*Isaiah 45:22*

THIS IS THE GREAT DIVINE WORD TO MAN, THE PERPETUAL call of love; it is therefore the Church's all-inclusive message. All the prophets, seers and psalmists of the past in varied tones and with differing emphases have uttered the same message. Upon man's answer to the message - when he has heard it - has depended his condition, his character, his destiny. "Face unto Me, and be ye set free, all the ends of the earth: for I am God." God gave the highest revelation of Himself to humanity in the incarnation, therefore these words of the ancient prophecy are supremely the words of Christ. The context of my text is quoted by the writers of the New Testament in direct application to Him. We are warranted, therefore, in dealing with this passage as finding its most powerful delivery in the Person and ministry of Jesus. It is through the fact of that ministry, not merely the ministry of nineteen centuries ago, which was straitened and limited, but the perpetual ministry of the Christ from Pentecost until now, that the Church is able to deliver this message. I think you will see what is on my own heart and mind this morning. We are facing, so far as our union as ministers and people is concerned, a new year of work. I am very much inclined to forget the things that are behind in order that we may press toward those that are before. As we face the future we are far more conscious this morning than we were three years ago of the problems, perplexities, and difficulties of our work. As we come to know the neighbourhood in which we are called to serve we are sometimes almost overwhelmed. We are, moreover, conscious that there are currents of thought which three years ago were undercurrents, but now are more evident and on the surface. It is well for us, therefore, quietly to get back for a morning's meditation to first principles, to remind our hearts, together as ministers and church, of what indeed is the Church's business. I gather up my whole message as we start our new year together and express it thus. We exist for one simple and all-inclusive purpose, to say in this neighbourhood, and so far as we may be able to make our voice heard and our influence felt, one thing only, and that, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." We cannot at Westminster say that as it ought to be said. By that I mean to say the message is too full, too varied, too infinite for one church to deliver it. The Word of God is symbolically referred to in that great book of dreams and visions, signs and symbols: thus, "His voice as the voice of many waters." If here we can express the music of one of the streams which mingle into the many waters, we shall thank God. Yet it is well for us to understand the full music to which our contribution is to be made. We go back, then, to this old text that we all know so well, that everyone here who has ever preached has preached about, not to discover in it something new, but to find in it the old without which the new is always useless, but in the power of which there is perpetually springtime following winter, new beauties blossoming out of the essential root. So I bring you back to first principles this morning as we face another year's work.

Because the One Who here speaks has revealed Himself to us in Christ finally and perfectly I shall ask you to think with me first of the centre, "Look unto Me," God as revealed in Christ; then of the circumference as here indicated, "All the ends of the earth"; then of the great claim as here made, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved." If one were seeking for a title for this morning's meditation, it might be described as, Centre and Circumference, the Story of a Circle.

First, then, let us turn our thought to the Centre. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." The ultimate revelation of God to man was made in the Christ. As I read the story of Christ in the New Testament I discover that the Man of Nazareth was but the revelation of One Who has been - and now the tenses are all at fault and there is no help for it - and must always be the Centre, the age-abiding Centre of the universe of God. I am not going to tarry there. The ultimate, final words were written long ago by the Apostle-Seer to whom was given to see things for all who should follow him. In those opening verses of the Gospel which bears his name, he has revealed to us the fact that the One Who came into time as Jesus was, in the deepest fact of His actual personality, "the Word." In the beginning with God, Himself God, present at and presiding over creation, sustaining all things by the word of His power, so that nothing has been made save by Him: Himself the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and so present in some sense to every human consciousness. All these things are mysteries of which there can be no final explanation. I mention them only that our hearts may be reminded of them as we proceed a little further. This Christ Whom we are called to preach is the age-abiding Centre of the creation of God, the Word of God Himself.

Leaving that, I ask you to remember that Christ is the centre of human history. All that preceded Him led to Him and culminated in Him. Everything since the time of His manifestation in the world has been affected by His presence here. All the highways of the past led to Him. All the highways from His coming unto this moment have proceeded from Him. He was the consummation of the old hopes and aspirations. We may think of the world on Hebrew or Gentile side, taking those old and convenient divisions with which we were familiar in our childhood, and we shall discover that everything led toward Himself. The Hebrew nation lived by hope in the coming of One: they were looking for Him; they were unable to produce Him; when He came they did not know Him as a nation. Yet as the centuries have passed since His coming we see how in His own Person He perfectly fulfilled all their expectations, and was the incarnate music which had expressed itself in their singing. All that was high and noble and ideal in their aspirations found fulfilment in the Man of Nazareth Who was at once the King with government resting upon His shoulder, and the suffering Servant bruised and broken and battered Who had been described in their ancient writings. All the lines of the strange and wonderful Hebrew history led to Him. When He came ritual was fulfilled, aspiration was realized. There came with Him the dawning of that day the gleaming glory of which the men of the past had caught glimpses of from many a mountain peak. There came the clear articulation of that truth, certain parts and emphases of which the teachers of the Hebrew nation had spoken to the people through the centuries. All that perhaps is readily granted. It is equally true that in the historic Christ there was found the consummation of all that was excellent in the Gentile world, and there had been much. We are greatly mistaken, and upon the basis of that mistake shall misinterpret history, if we imagine that God had abandoned the world outside Hebraism. There had been mighty figures in the Gentile world. Take the testimony of the greatest of them preceding Christ; they themselves claim that they had been able to do no other than to teach men to ask questions. Socrates and Plato both practically declare in so many words that their mission was a mission of instructing men how to inquire. What were the questions they had asked? Questions concerning the immortality of man, concerning the destiny of the soul, concerning the character of the Creator. When one reads some of the writings of those Gentile thinkers one is inclined to think that God was leading them as distinctly and clearly as He was leading the Hebrew prophets in their doings and declarations, leading them to inquire. Yet remember this, they had been unable to give any answer to their questions. In some senses the world reached its greatest intellectual height before Christ came: Greek eloquence, sculpture, philosophy, poetry, we still go back to them for the standards. Yet the Greeks had not been able to answer these supreme questions. He came, a Man of Nazareth, and the very questions they had been asking were all answered. He "brought life and in-corruption to light through the gospel." He, not in any long and set discourse, but by the familiar manifestation of His everyday speech, tore away the veil and revealed to men the destiny of the soul, and the nature and character of God, this last supremely. So that the idea of God which is embodied in the best thinking of the century in which we live has come absolutely as the result of His presence in the world and His teaching. He was thus not merely the One Who consummated and completed all that was excellent in the centuries before He came. He became the starting point of a new history. The old history had commenced with the creation of man. The new history commenced with the incarnation of God. By His coming new forces were introduced into human life, new aspirations were felt in the human heart. Men began to see, dimly, and yet as they had never seen before. That theme is a fascinating one. I remit it to your own thinking. I beg you often to think of it in these days. Every look of man outside the Church, I am not speaking merely of men in the Church, every look of man toward better conditions and the realization of brotherhood is the result of the light that flashed by Galilee and over the Judean valleys. Every high and noble conception of human life which we cherish, and which some men cherish who are telling us that the churches have done their work, was born with Jesus. I am not proposing to enumerate any of the things of which I am thinking. You know and are thinking of them. Every conception that is high and noble that is in the mind of man today was born with the Man of Nazareth. So I say that He stands at the centre of human history. All before Him leading toward Him: all after Him coming forth from Him.

Again He stands at the centre of life today. He still retains His absolute pre-eminence as the ideal man. It is to this Man of Nazareth that men turn even after they have denied some things that we of the evangelical faith teach concerning Him, and they point to Him at least as the ideal man, as the One Who has revealed in human history a type of humanity that had never been dreamed of. If I say that all men recognize that He is the ideal man, I do not mean to say that they are willing to conform to the pattern. They are not. While men stand in the presence of the sublime dignity of the manhood of Jesus they never answer or obey it save as they are brought by the power of the Spirit into the place of submission to Him first as Saviour. There He stands amid the men of His own age, a peasant, garbed in simplicity, girt as a slave, always serving. Hear me when I tell you this, that there is no thinking man in the East or West, whether East or West refer to London or the world, who does not recognize the dignity and beauty of that ideal, even though he do not obey it and is not prepared to follow it. Christ stands at the centre of individual life revealing the ideal.

There is another word which is a supreme word and may be dismissed in a sentence. He stands at the centre not merely revealing an ideal but communicating the dynamic. That is the burden of the preaching here perpetually, and I need not detain you to argue it this morning. That is the supreme and lonely splendor of this Christ, not that He flashes upon human life that is paralyzed an ideal - that He does; but that He touches the paralyzed life with power until it also becomes the ideal life. That is the loneliness of the Christ. The other is His loneliness also, for we refuse to put into comparison with Him any teacher the world has ever had in revelation of the possibility of human life. Yet this is the final loneliness today, that He stands amid men, with all their advancement and all their progress and all their new philosophies, and wherever a man comes to Him, from the East or West, North or South, paralyzed, helpless, beaten, broken, damned so far as a man can be in this world, this same Imperial One touches him with power to purpose, and he stands upon his feet and lives. That is why I continue to preach Him.

Then He stands at the centre today of society, teaching men that there can be no regeneration of society save upon the basis of the regeneration of individuals. We are told that socialism is Christianity. That depends. So far as the men who are uttering their convictions concerning the social ideal have seen the realization of life upon the plane where war of every kind shall cease, that is Christianity: but so far as they are attempting to realize their dream while men are still in themselves evil and sinning, that is not Christianity. Jesus Christ confronts the individual man and says with passion and tenderness, "Ye must be born anew." I will give you life.

He stands at the centre of the nations. They are not looking at Him, but He stands there. He has given to the world all truth concerning government. He has revealed to the world the fact that humanity can finally live out its perfect life only under an absolute monarch. He has also revealed to the world that there is only one absolute monarch, and that is God. He is calling men everywhere - mark the emphasis of the familiar word - to "seek - first the Kingdom of God." God is the absolute monarch He came to preach. In one brief sentence He flashed upon the world the whole conception of the true constitution of a nation, "One is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. ... One is your Master, even the Christ." I do not know how you feel, but I am startled anew by the comprehensiveness of that word of Christ, by its profound philosophy. I am startled by the fact of how far the world is from understanding it.

What is He saying? "Look unto Me." I quoted the text in other words, attempting to convey the real force of the Hebrew, for this word, "Look," is not the word that is most commonly translated so; it is a word that literally means "face," "Face unto Me," that is the call. Mark if you will in the simplest way what this word is, and what it is in regard to the Christ. If only we were simple enough and I dare have a blackboard in this pulpit! Imagine it for a moment, and that upon it you have a diagram of a circle. You take a point which is the centre, mark the sweep of your circle. At the centre write the word "Me"; around it write "the ends of the earth." Look for a moment or two at that circle, and let me say some of the simplest things that you have nearly forgotten, though you learned them once. Look at the circle for a moment. You cannot draw a straight line from the centre but it touches the circumference. There is no point in any circumference from which you cannot draw a straight line to the centre. If you attempt to draw a straight line from the circumference which does not touch the centre it touches the circumference again, getting back to its own dead level, and continues on into the distance never touching the centre. That you may see it more clearly, with your eye fixed on the diagram, look at the centre; we have drawn a circumference. You cannot put your pencil or chalk anywhere outside the centre but that you touch a circumference. You can sweep a circumference anywhere outside the superficial area exposed to your view. I like Isaiah's "the ends of the earth." At the centre God revealed in Christ, for we may add to Isaiah's vision the revelation of the New Testament. What then? All the straight lines from that centre touch the circumference, the myriad circumferences that sweep around the centre. I do not think that the psalmist was thinking of circles and circumferences, yet he was in the midst of the same philosophy when he exclaimed, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them." All the lines and forces of God are out toward His humanity. You are in a circumference which is related to that centre, nor can you escape therefrom. Round the centre there sweep myriad circumferences, and there is not one who can escape. We are all in His purpose. We are all in the provision of His infinite grace, in some sense related to Him by purpose. It is possible that I am not experimentally related to Him, that I am not receiving the light He came to give, or the life He came to bestow, that I am not responsive to the love that is in His heart: but I cannot escape Him. If you will let me put that for one minute in another way, not for the sake of the multitude of Christian people, but for the sake of the one man who has drifted in here and does not know Christ as Saviour, there is a straight line from where you are to the heart of God; you have no journey to take, you are in relation to Him already in His economy and purpose: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

Follow me now as we come to that last great word, the claim: "Face unto Me." What is the thought conveyed in that call? That what is the matter with man, whether you use the term individually or generically, is that his face is not toward God. That is the trouble with human life individually. That is the trouble with human life socially. That is at the root of the agony of international dispute and war and armament. It is but a dream we are allowed to dream, we cannot hurry the processes of God; the consummation is not yet, but it will be. How will it come? All the nations of the earth are to face to God. That is the end. I am at the circumference of which He is the centre. Sweeping lines round about that central personality in the universe include me, pass through my life. The cry that comes from the centre, transcendent, immanent - I do not care for these words - the cry that comes from the centre, from the centre of this life and light, is this, "Face unto Me." God has never turned His back upon humanity. With that statement perfectly agrees the language of the apostolic writers. They never asked or suggested that God should become reconciled to man. It is always that man should be reconciled to God. It is the same great figure as Isaiah's. We speak of reconciliation as though God had turned His back on man and that man had turned his back on God. It is not so. Man has turned His back upon God. God has never turned His back upon man. Because He has never turned His back upon men - oh, I know the humanness of it and the incompleteness, and the difficulty of the figure, yet hear it - the face of the Father is still looking toward the far country where the prodigal has gone; the cry of the Father, "Face unto Me, and be ye saved," indicates the only way of salvation for a man, for society, for a nation. For a man, "Face unto Me."

There is life for a look at the Crucified One.

We do not all like that hymn. Some speak of it as being unworthy of the singing of a great congregation, but that is because their understanding of it has been so feeble. There is the profoundest philosophy in it for me.

There is life for a look at the Crucified One,

There is life at this moment for thee,

Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved,

Unto Him Who was nailed to the Tree.

You say it was borrowed from the old story of the brazen serpent. Certainly, but what is the story of the brazen serpent? It is the story of people who had broken God's law and turned their backs upon Him, beaten, suffering, turning back to the brazen serpent because that was the symbol of His authority. The great truth is that they turned back to God. That is human salvation. "Look unto Me." Oh, the comfort of it this morning. It is the voice of thunder that comes to us out of the infinite space. It is the voice of Galilee. I hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That voice was so simple and winsome that His mother loved it in babyhood and loved the music of it in manhood. It was so gentle that the men and women who came into contact with Him never trembled at the thunder. Yet behind it there was the infinite majesty and mystery of the calling of God to man, "Face unto Me." Man, you can do it where you are. You can do it without an inquiry room. You can do it without any sacramentarian interference on the part of priest or preacher. "Face to Me." That is His call.

That is His call to society. That is His call in the presence of all the problems that vex us. I am not expressing any opinion now as to the question at issue, but this Christian congregation this morning believes with all its heart that if directors and men would face to Him there would be no railway strike. "Face to Me" is the great cry. Remember that in this same great chapter of Isaiah a little way before our text these words occur, "Declare ye, and bring it forth; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath shewed this from ancient time? Who hath declared it of old? Have not I the Lord? And there is no God beside Me; a just God and a Saviour." If you are going to take away from Christ the fact that He is a Saviour, then you are going to take away that in which when men look they find life. If you take that away you cannot reconstruct society. "Look unto Me." Not merely the ideal, the social reformer, but a Saviour and a just God.

That is His word to the nations. We are looking in other directions. We are still looking to armaments and to policies. Oh that we might be delivered from them and look unto Him. What then?

"Be ye saved." I do not want us to drop that word saved but to understand it. "Be set free." The facing of man, the turning of man to God is the liberation of man from all the things that bind him. It is not license. Man is not let loose upon the universe uncontrolled. That would be but to work ruin and havoc everywhere. He is brought back into true relation to the centre of the universe. His life then indeed becomes in tune with the infinite in the deep and true sense of that word. He has found His way back to the path from which he had wandered. He is set free from all the things that spoil by being bound to the central throne of righteousness and judgment. "Be ye set free." Yes, saved, set free. This is what we need in our sociology. You may hold your meetings and discuss plans and pass resolutions, divide up and get angry and quarrel, but it is only as you can set men there that you can bind them together. It is only as men are bound to the throne of God that they are bound to each other. It is only as men are set free from lust and passion and selfishness that they can be bound together in a great society, a great brotherhood. "Saved"! It is not a narrow word. It is not the peculiar property of the Salvation Army. Let no one go away imagining I am saying a critical thing of the Salvation Army. I wish I could have had you all with me at the Albert Hall recently as I sat and rested my soul and thanked God for the Salvation Army. It is not, however, their peculiar word. It is their word, blessed be God that it is. But it is our word also to this district of the West so far as we can touch it, and to the East so far as we are responsible for it. Being saved means being set free from all the things that spoil the soul. There is only one way: "Face unto Me," says God. Let me use my geometrical figure once more and I have done. If my memory serves me right it was in the third book of Euclid that we learned that concentric circles are such as have a common centre. If that be true, then the ends of the earth - and what does that mean? The Hebrew word means cessation, the point where it leaves off. What is beyond it? I know not. I am at the ends of the earth. The circles are still sweeping round and round, what? The same throne, the same centre, concentric circles having the same centre, the same throne, the same God, the same Saviour. I leave you to make your application. Take the lines which in imagination I drew upon that first circle a little while ago. You remember that a line that proceeded from the centre to the circumference of your first circle can be carried out and it touches all the rest. The line that commences at the circumference but was not drawn toward the centre goes into ever increasing distance from the centre. From all these simple things learn this at least, that if I am in right relation to the centre here, so am I, so shall I be, through all the ages of which I do not know the mystery. It is when a man finds himself in right relation to the centre there that he laughs at death with the laughter of holy victory, and recognizes that passing is but transition from limitation to larger life. Do not let us be at all anxious to prepare for dying, but very anxious to prepare for living. Am I ready for heaven? Yes, if I am, ready for London. Am I ready for eternity? Yes, if I am fit for time. If my face is toward the centre here,

Then let the unknown morrow bring with it what it may,

It can bring with it nothing but He will bear me through.

That applies not merely to changing seasons and years of quickly passing life, but to the up-heaped ages that baffle my thinking and yet rejoice my heart, the "for ever" more of which I am a part.