

“What is the greatest miracle or dream that you look forward to in your life?”

“TRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE”

6. An extraordinary presence - The ruler of nature - He knows and understands us

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AN EXTRAORDINARY PRESENCE

Above all Christ shows authoritativeness and superiority on every occasion.

Let us try to imagine those people who for weeks had seen Him return to the seashore, and then for three successive years continuously witnessed extraordinary episodes... until some abandoned everything to follow Him always and everywhere.

They were used to troublemakers, especially in those years when everyone awaited the Messiah, and surely troublemakers arouse alarm. But Jesus lies outside the usual scheme of things. He does not incite the people to take up arms against the Roman Empire. The leaders will be most preoccupied with stalking Him to catch Him out and trip him up, thus unwittingly bearing witness.

It is midday, and Christ retires to a small house to eat, but the people crowd the entrance. He continues to speak. The Pharisees are in the first row. They bring Jesus a man who has been paralysed for twenty years. Not being able to get him through the doorway, they let him in through the roof just behind Jesus. Jesus turns and says: “Be confident, son, your sins are forgiven.” Immediately the Pharisees think: “This man is blasphemous; who can forgive sins except God?” Turning from the poor ill man to the people Jesus says: “Now which of these is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or ‘Get up and walk?’ But to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, I say to you: ‘Get up, pick up your bed and go home.’” And the man gets up and makes his way amid the understandably loud cries of the crowd.¹ And such events occur daily: “He arrived in the evening tired of healing” is a refrain in the Gospel.² »

¹ See Matthew 9:11-8.

² Mark 5:32ff.

* Source: *The Journey to Truth Is an Experience*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 2006, pp. 60-62.

» THE RULER OF NATURE

Those who follow Him witness His exceptional command over nature.

"Then He got into a boat, followed by His disciples. Without warning a storm broke over the lake, so violent that the waves were breaking right over the boat. But He was asleep. So they went to Him and woke Him saying: 'Save us, Lord, we are going down!' And He said to them: 'Why are you so frightened, you men of little faith?' And with that, He stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and all was calm again. The men were astounded and said: 'Whatever kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him.'"³

HE KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS US

But the most persuasive power, which made Nathanael yield and which takes hold of each of us is this mastery over our minds and hearts: His understanding. It is normal for Him to read one's past, to discern one's intentions so that everyone feels that even the secret parts of their human personalities belong to Him.

He feels tired and sits near a well and a woman comes to draw water. "Give me some water," Jesus asks her, and she begins to tease Him in a rough, tactless manner. "If you knew who is asking you: 'Give me some water,' you would ask Him for some. The well is deep and you haven't got a bucket, how can you give me water? ... Go and call your husband." "But I have no husband." "You are right to say 'I have no husband'; for although you have had five, the one you have now is not your husband."⁴ And she relents.

When people met prostitutes or tax collectors they had to keep their distance so as not to be contaminated by them; this was a rather clever way to make moral law penetrate thick heads. But He behaved in a completely different way. He even ate with these people.

He entered Jericho and was making his way through the town when a man, whose name was Zacchaeus, one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man, made his appearance. He was eager to see the kind of man Jesus was, but being so short, he could not see Jesus for the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus, who was to pass that way. When Jesus reached the spot He looked up and spoke: "Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I must stay at your house today." And Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed Him joyfully. Everyone complained when they saw what was happening. "He has gone to stay at a sinner's house," they said. But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, "Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount."⁵

Before Him there is no barrier. He easily penetrates the complicated tangle of the human heart, by surprise or intuition. It is as if what I own is also His. Nothing disarms us or makes us yield with a sense of total abandonment as much as being discovered and understood.

³ Matthew 8:23-7.

⁴ See John 4:7-30.

⁵ Luke 19:1-18.