

Reaching the Lost "Just As I Am"

Intro: Today churches are trying really hard to get so-called "non-churched" people into their doors. It is a worthy effort. To that end I am seeing a lot of emphasis being placed on removing anything that might make the potential visitor feel put off or uncomfortable.

One thing that you see a lot in church ads is the expression "come as you are." Just a few days ago I received an impact card from a church with just that phrase. I think I understand the concern. Perhaps some people may feel that they do not have nice enough clothes to go to church or that they don't want to "dress up" for services. As so, "come as you are" is an appeal that says, "Don't worry about such things. Come dressed how you want to."

There is a sense in which God also says, "Come as you are." The idea is embodied in one of the most frequently used invitation songs in our song book. Consider for a moment the words that song:

- 1. Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- 2. Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- 3. Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- 4. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- 5. Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- 6. Just as I am, thy love unknown
hath broken every barrier down;*

*now, to be thine, yea thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

Not everyone finds it easy to read the old English verbs and pronouns, but it is clear that what we are saying to Jesus is that we are coming to Him "just as we are." But what does this mean? And why is that important?

It all starts with an understanding of our condition before God.

All of us have violated the law of God.

The testimony of both testaments is that every accountable person (except Jesus) has sinned against the law of God.

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. (Eccl. 7:20)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23)

In the song we hear references to the "dark spot" that is on our souls because of sin.

What that means to us is that all of us as sinners are under the righteous wrath of God.

We are spiritually dead, separated from God.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Eph 2:1-3)

In the song we hear reference to the "barrier" that exists between man and God.

We are headed for eternal death.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)

Because of that there is no basis for us to claim to be righteous before God.

Since we all have sinned, we must also acknowledge that our condition before God is a helpless one.

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; (Romans 3:9-10)

We are in the words of the song "poor, wretched, and blind." We have nothing to merit God's approval. Like the backsliding Christians of Laodicea we are "*wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, (Rev. 3:17)*

And if we really think about our condition then we ought to be filled with the deepest anxiety about it.

We should really be conflicted within. There should be a struggle inside that says, "What can I do about my sinful condition?"

In the words of the song we should be "tossed about with many a conflict" or to use Jesus words, we should be people who "labor and are heavy laden" with the burden of our sin.

There should be a fear in us that is based on the words of Scripture:

*It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
(Hebrews 10:31)*

And so the song speaks about that struggle--"fightings within, fear without."

Though many people never think about where our sins put them before God, we should recognize that there is no basis for us to claim to be righteous before God. What can we say?

That we didn't intend to be so bad?

That we did right most of the time?

That a few sins should not matter?

That we've done a lot of good things to cancel out our sins?

None of these excuses will remove a single sin. In a word, we are "without one plea!"

Is there any hope for us? There is indeed!

We can be made righteous on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus.

It all starts with the love of God who saw us in our miserable and sinful condition and gave His son for us.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (Jn. 3:16)

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:6-8)

Consequently in the song we sing "thy love unknown has broken every barrier down."

What the Scriptures teach us is that Jesus is the only possible atoning sacrifice for our sins.

*The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn. 1:29) knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:18-19)*

Only Jesus could be the sacrifice for sin, but for only He lived in this world without sin.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Heb. 4:15)

Only upon Him can the punishment of our sins be placed.

And that why in the song we refer to Him as "the Lamb of God." He is the only adequate sacrifice for our sins.

By coming to Him in that faith we can be forgiven.

What Jesus accomplished for us is truly marvelous. His blood can take away our sin and restore us to fellowship with God. The good news of the gospel is that you can come "just as you are," that, without any merit at all, but trusting in Him, Jesus will remove that sin.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, (Ephesians 1:7)

Through Him the barrier caused by sin can be "broken down."

Through Him God will "welcome" us.

Through Him God will "pardon" us.

Through Him God will "cleanse" us.

Through Him God will "relieve" us.

In the place of our blindness, there will be "sight."

In the place of poverty, there will be "riches."

In the place of sickness there will be "healing of the mind."

In Him we can "find all that we need!" to be saved.

And we will be God's forever if we remain faithful to Him.

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:29)

Or as the song puts it: to be "thine, thine alone"

Conclusion: And so the song puts into a few verses the good news of the gospel. but there are two things you must know:

You must not wait--"waiting not to rid my soul" This blessing is not for those who plan to come to Jesus, to those who are thinking about coming to Jesus someday, but those who come now, who do not wait.

You must come to Him on His terms!

Come in faith realizing that without Him there is no hope

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1)

As the song says, "because you promised, I believe"

Come in repentance realizing that you must turn from sin

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, (Acts 17:30)

Come in confession realizing that He is the Son of God

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Rom. 10:9-10)

Come in baptism realizing that in that act you unite with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection

And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.' (Acts 22:16)

Will you today do that? When you sing the words of this song this morning, ask yourself, "Have I come to the Lamb of God?"