

## **Phineas F. Bresee Sermon Notes – St. Matthew 16:6**

Every attempt has been made to transcribe these notes accurately. Indecipherable text appears in brackets [-]. Abbreviations transcribed as they appear in the notes.

St. Matthew XVI.6 – Then Jesus said unto these. Take heed and beware of the leaven &c.

Two tendencies of thought beset and grieved the Savior. The one was towards materialistic unbelief. The other was towards formalism. The one saw no spiritual universe and found no Father's heart upon which to rest. The other almost equally blind, saw only the most [serious] things of ritual & forms. Jesus Christ leads men in a better way. He leads to the apprehension & liberty of truth. There seems to be a constant tendency among men to leave the natural, clear, simple truths of J.C. and drift away. Either into unbelief on the one hand or into formalism on the other either of which is fatal to Christian living. The man who abides in clear truth. Above whom the eternal visits shine like the stars. Upon whose brow inf. & unchanging principles fall like the sunlight: is neither unbeliever nor a formalist. He sees too clearly for the former and feels too intensely for the latter. We cannot watch too closely the tendencies of our lives and of our churches. Nor be too careful that neither unbelief nor formalism taint our lives. A church that has lived to celebrate its silver wedding and expects to celebrate its golden & diamond and even wear the jewels of [-] youth down through the generations; a church that hopes to be privileged day by day through the uncounted years to do Christ's work may well wait upon this the anniversary of its espousals to God. And not only ask, what the tendencies of its life are but for the divine hand to guide it on in the way of service and victory &c. I might this morning cast my eyes backward along this quarter of a century of work. I am interested in it. I with you have taken some little part in it. There are many things that as we look cause the heart to grow tender & the eyes to fill with tears &c. But the past is past. Each year is sealed up & has proceeded us to the throne. And today I am more interested in the future. In the baptism of Christian hearts. In the molding of Ch. lives. In the [bulwark] & camp fires. In the bugle calls. In the clashing arms. In the din of the battle. In the cry of the warrior. In the shout of the victor that these yr of the future hold in store for this church. There are some hints in this text that may help in these yr to come. We have here by strong negative statement. Which comes to us all the stronger because in the form of warning in reference to its opposite. Some of the elements & conditions of a [-]. A necessity of the clear apprehension of the invisible. The Christian church rests upon the unseen facts. The Christian life is under the control & guidance of the unseen forces. Most truth is very intangible but very real. It would be very difficult with the scalpel to dissect a principle on a geometrical demonstration or even a thought or an affection. Yet as upon the great unseen facts of force and attraction rest the universe as upon the arms of the Inf. so upon the unseen forces of Inf. thought & love rests the Church of God & all Ch. life. I do not say that the soul sees not these verities. The soul has eyes beside these windows. How is it you see through this. The image of the object is fixed on [retainer]. The soul has other cameras upon which the images are caught & the soul sees. The mathematician sees his demonstration. The Logician the culmination & results of his logic &c. The architect &c. The sculptor sees the marble angel and hastens to give it form. The poet hears the melody of the

sweet song in his soul and rises at midnight to chime it down in rhythm. Who will say that the soul of Beethoven or Handel had not ears to hear the divine melody. Who would say that Milton had not eyes to see though these windows were shut. [Fanny Crosby]. Out of the eternal silence of the universe have come forth the mighty facts upon which Ch. life rests. While we look not at the things which are seen which are temporal &c. We live as seeing him that is invisible. We live surrounded by an invisible universe which [presses] its personality, its facts & forces down upon us as nothing else does. Take away the unseen & you not only take away the Christian religion but everything else of value. In the sun, for us 94 or 96 of the rays of the electric light are unseen rays upon which the [seen cast] so these unseen facts are, the great facts upon which everything else rests. First among the unseen is the Inf. Father of us all. Who is Lord over all &c. He in whose presence we always wait. Whose we are and whom we serve. The manifestation of whose wisdom and power are everywhere about us. Who has been revealed to us by the L.J.C. Who is all about us in the strength of his omnipotence & the infinitude of his power. It was the long continued effort of God through the ages to teach man to look up and say "Our Father." And today as it seems to me there is some danger that while we continue to say the words [there] the vision they contain [be] lost. We talk about the first great cause - about Evolution & Law. And other secondary causes or effects. Until the Fathers love and power & wisdom working in the heavens above & the earth beneath for human [-]. Whose beneficent providence is over us in the largest and smallest things. Who makes all the [wheels] of nature & human life run in concert for our good. Are comparatively lost sight of. This causes prayer to be a form and worship a sound of ceremonies and opens the heart to sensuous and worldly things. And Ch. life is shorn of its glory & the Church of its power. There must be a clear perception of the Divine Presence. A strong realization of the fact of Eternal living. The hope of immortality rests not strongly upon any natural argument. The universal hope of the race may point as with an index finger to the life beyond. And love going out into the stillness may whisper of other worlds. Man's fragmenting life may be a prelude to more perfect development. But these are but the dreams of a homesick wanderer. Or are they more. Who may tell. Christian life enters the temple of a new experience. Though its feet may be among the shadows of the earthly. Its brow is bathed in the light of the heavenly. Though there are a thousand unsolved mysteries there are revealed &c ex- a thousand E truths which entering into our lives reaches up to the Inf. The earnest of E-life which is paid down to our hearts becomes to us the assurance of immortal glory. We become partakers of unearthly forces. Coming with the Father &c. Ch. life is already hid with Christ in God and triumphs in the present experience of a Saviors presence & love. To us come the ministries of the unseen angels &c. I stand under the arch of Christian teaching. My conception of life & its environment I draw from utterances of lips touched with the live coal of Divine inspiration. I wait in the vast arena where each is having his own test - is running his own race. To inspire me my attention is called to the witnesses &c. Here too is seen the necessity of the intensely worshipful Spirit. Perhaps there is nothing we are more in danger of then saying words without fully their true meaning & expecting the promises which are channels cut by the divine hand from the [river] of life right by our hearts. And yet never putting our lips to the refreshing healing waters. We may sing over the songs which have thrilled the hearts of generations and they be nothing

more than an idle sound upon our lips. With what intense affection the Ch. Spirit gazes upon the LJC. With what attention it gazes upon his wondrous life. With what reverential awe and intensity of emotion it gazes upon his dying agony. How intensely earnest was the worship of the early Church as it thought upon the dying Christ. Go into the catacombs today or some of the great museums where there are collections from them & you will be impressed with the deep earnest worship paid to the dying Christ. It is here intimated that the Spt. of the church is to be that of humble earnest enthusiastic work. The pretense of aristocracy be it moneyed or cultured. Does it arise from generous [or] place – does not stand a moment in the [mighty] glance of the face of Jesus Christ. The thin varying of forms & ceremonies does not abide a moment in his presence. There is no test so crucial to test character as the Christly Spirit. The pride is gone. Humbly a man stands before God among his fellows. Dead formality is gone. Every form is full of the solemn earnestness of the ages past & the E truths to come. All the rituals of service. All the songs of devotion. The prayers at the mercy seat. All are covered with the streaming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here life is terribly earnest. Every thought & word & act is [germinated] and will grow up into the forest of Eternity. Christ's Spirit is upon them and they must do the work of him that sent them. We are thankful for the Spirit of the Church & yet even in this day it falls far below the ideal &c. We cannot look abroad and see what the church is doing without gratitude. See how she is permeating the world with Ch. principle. And how the gospel is being [born on] &c. The noble character it has produced in the past and is producing now without lifting up our thanksgiving to God, I daily thank God for a home in the Church. For association with men & women engaged in this noble work. But yet when we look around – possibly into our own hearts and see how little of planning comparatively there is for J.C. and how much for self. How comparatively light are the burdens we take upon our arms and lay upon our hearts scarcely amounting to the [merest] incidentals of our personal luxury. We may well lift our eyes toward the [-] & [wake] of [formation] &c. This church has done noble work in the days past &c. Work into which they have put their thought and their love. But greater opportunities in every way will come to it in the future. Twenty five ys. of the service of God has had the same effect upon you that it had on Jacob of old. He said I crossed this brook with a staff. Now behold this multitude. Here was family life & wealth & power &c. What we used on this anniversary is what Jacob sought on that night at Penuel. That you may so go forth as Princes unto God a conquering army. Your faith & courage should be strengthened by the past. Your very burdens and toils have turned to wings to enable you to mount up like eagles. Your prayers & your thought and your struggles have brought enlarged capacity. You are the veterans of the service. You know what devotion and consecration mean. And you know what it is to have this consecration taken up into the divine arms & ushered in divine love & filled with divine power. Hitherto God has led you. The promise of God "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee & through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned. Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable & I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee & people for thy life' &c. Kingly men & women have been given you &c. There has been given you the power of song &c. Men & women of social power &c. A church that contains social forces [considering] surroundings &c almost unequaled &c. All

this multiples responsibility. If this is misdirected through wrong conceptions of what a church should be &c. If we come to regard it as a somewhat often exclusive social society. Where is to be gathered cultured and refined men & women for artistic and social ends. If we lose the grand idea that our [Mis.] is especially to those who are without the refinements which the religion of J.C. brings. &c. The church will lose its distinctive character as the Ch. of JC &c. But if you feel that this culture & art and wealth &c. are all dedicated to the blessing of others & especially to those who are without these things. If you shall say with all the fullness of its meaning "the poor &c." That your heart & social life &c. are given &c. Especially if you look after the poor boys & girls that have no one else to look after them &c. Our Ch. in Boston. The history of the church like all Christians & church life has been like the emblematic river which Ezekiel saw &c. There comes over me this morning this vision of the past. I see this branch of the river of life flowing down through this dessert. I see the channels full of water flowing to these houses. I see the gathering mists & clouds of mercy pouring their hallowed influences upon the good & bad all around. I see the young lives that have been gathered and molded &c. I see the multitudes of thirsty souls that have come from far & near and drank at these healing streams and gone on their way. I see a train of holy & redeemed spirits that pass this day before the throne & sing "unto him &c." I look about me & see the almost boundless vision of this churches influence. I look above me & see the still broader vision of that shoreless glory. And as I wait around the golden alters I am [enabled] to this man was born there &c. And still another vision is upon me. It is the vision of the future. I see this stream widening in its influence & power. I see souls converted around its alters. I see the baptism of power as they rest upon the church sanctifying & strengthening &c. I see her sons & daughters going out followed by her prayers & wealth to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Son of God. I see the portals of the skies opening ever &c. and [more] and a crowned hero entering in amid the shout of the hosts of heaven. As I look the stream is lost in [illusion] glory. And I see a company that no man can number. And hear a shout of 'Alleluia the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

**End of notes**