

Come Down And We Will Believe!

The soldiers who stood at the foot of the cross uttering their cry were sensationalists. In their eyes, Jesus could vindicate his claim of Messiahship only by the doing of the stupendous and the colossal. They were asking to see, not the picture of silent self-denial and sacrifice, obeying the will of God, but something as dramatic as loosening his hands and feet and stepping down from the cross. And when he did not do it, the whole incident became so boring that the soldiers sat down and cast lots for his garments. There, within a stone's throw of them, the greatest drama ever enacted was in progress. Yet, they were completely unaware of it because they were looking for the sensational.

Today on every hand, people are trying to find God in the spectacular and dramatic. To them, the test of every sermon is not "*Is it true?*" but "*Does it sweep me across the whole key-board of human emotion, leaving me perched on a mountain-type high?*" The test of revelation is not "*Did it come from the Book?*" for that is ever so undramatic; but, "*Did it come by vision or by dream?*" Similarly, the test of one's spirituality is judged, not by his devotion to God or his service to man, but by his amazing ability to feel overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, while speaking in an ecstatic tongue.

People who try to find God in the spectacular and dramatic, are often likely to miss God for the very reason that there is a sense in which no one wants an unsensational God. Naaman, the leper, wanted God to cure him of his dread disease in a dramatic, spectacular way. God told him to go dip seven times in the muddy Jordan. How undramatic! Yet he found healing. Jesus came to Matthew who was sitting at the seat of customs and said, "*Follow me.*" It was undramatic but Matthew, by obeying the command, became a faithful disciple and apostle.

So many are missing Christ because they are expecting religion to be dramatic. They are looking for a "*sign*" which Jesus said was the mark of an evil and adulterous generation (Matthew 27:42). Such need to hear the statement of Abraham to the rich man in Hades: "*If they heed not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead*" (Luke 16:31). Salvation is not sensational. Faith is not all emotion. You can sit in its very shadow, as did the soldiers, and still miss the meaning.

—Harry Gipson