

Jesus Christ the Known and the Unknown

Om. A-sa-to ma sad gam-ma-ya. Ta-ma-so-ma jyo-tir gam-ma-ya. Mri-tyor ma a-mri-tam ga-ma-ya. Avir avir ma e-dhi. Rudra yat te dak-shi-nam mu-kham. Tena mam pahi nityam. Tena mam pahi nityam. Tena mam pahi nityam.

Lead us from the unreal to the Real. Lead us from darkness unto Light. Lead us from death to Immortality. Reveal to us Thy Resplendent Truth and evermore protect us, Oh Lord, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face.

Merry Christmas. Welcome everyone to this Christmas service of our temple. We are not a Christian church. We have no name for our church. For the sake of convenience, we say Vedanta. [Audience laughs.] But “Vedanta” is only a name. Christ is above all names and forms. Christ had of course a name, but the real Christ, the true Christ has to be experienced and when he is experienced, he becomes unknown. So the title of my talk this morning is Jesus Christ, the known and the unknown. It is the unknown Jesus that is eternally present. He was never born. He did not die. All that we see and read about his life in history is the known Christ. We know that there was a boy born to a pious family, carpenter’s family. We know how he was born in a miserable place in a cowshed, and how voices were heard and how he was taken from this place to... to Egypt. All this... we know about his life up to twelve years. After twelve years, his life we read in the Bible, and we shall read his birth story as part of our normal program.

[He reads the program and then the birth story is read. This portion of tape is not transcribed.]

Up to the age to the age of twelve we know some facts of the life of this young boy. His father was a carpenter and he helped his father in his work. He was very dear. Even in his childhood he had developed certain qualities, what we cannot name properly, but which you can feel. So Jesus, even at that age of twelve, he helped his parents. He went to the temple, to the Jewish temple and he saw there that more than God, the people are interested in business – money. So he was such a brave boy. He scolded them; he chided them. He said this is a place of God, and you are doing business here. And nobody could protest him. And so up to the age of twelve we’ll find him as a person who was, who knew really what God is. But his later statements about God and spiritual life come after he returned from his disappearance. He disappeared-- where, nobody knows.

Some people have different theories that he traveled [to] many countries, including India and devoted himself to great austerities and learned from many teachers. There is no certain statement of facts: that this he did; this he did not. But he returned at the age of about thirty and lived only about three years and a half. And his ministry began there. He came to the place where already the teacher, Jewish teacher was baptizing people. And he said, “Baptize me also.” He said, “I cannot baptize you. I cannot hold the shoes of your feet. You are different. You do not belong to our category, or to category to any of the priests, and any of the religious, so-called religious people. You have been sent by God

for a mission.” So from that time on, he... we find him teaching people about God, and he chose people from the lowest strata of the society: fishermen. Fishermen were fishing in the boats and he said, “Follow me.” And there was such a power, such a strength in his words and in his personality there was such compassion and love that these poor fisherman, they obeyed him literally. They left their nets and their family and everything and followed him. And he then began to teach them, irrespective of men or women.

He began to teach them the truth of God, how it is necessary to be pure in heart, how it is... how we should not crave for worldly wealth, worldly treasures, but the treasures of heaven. That chapter is called, “Sermon on the Mount.” They did not understand him. How could they? He was speaking of the kingdom of God and they were all suffering then under the rule of the Romans. They said, the prophets in olden times have spoken of a messiah, a deliverer, who would come and save us from the persecution, from the rule of these cruel and oppressive Romans. So they thought that he had come to rescue their earthly kingdom. And they would be free from the rule of the Romans: that was their idea. They did not understand what he really meant by his Father, but still he spoke. Still he said many things that would near... in the words of Swami Vivekananda, that would require centuries for people to understand, really understand what he spoke, what he meant.

When he said, “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and all thy soul,” what is that love? It is not common love. Love, everybody knows and people also know how he was compassionate. He was... people who were called: sinners, he had such compassion for them. We find several such stories in the Bible, in the New Testament of the Bible-- the character of Lord Jesus Christ. But what he spoke, at the back of the words there is something, which we cannot understand at this stage of our mind.

When our mind becomes pure... “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”.... What kind of God [is that]? This is the unknown God. So when he spoke, “Don’t crave for the treasures of heaven. Don’t care for the treasures of the earth for they will pass on, but care for the treasures of heaven.” And he mentioned what the treasures are: You cannot hate anybody; you cannot oppress anybody; you cannot torture anybody. Such is your ideal to be a lover of God. It is not easy. It is not easy. I have spent so many years in different countries in order to find that God. And I have found that God. I say, “I am the light of the world.” What is this light? This light is the unknown Jesus, the Jesus that sustains our faith and love. See? And later on Jesus Christ, he did not found anything that is Christianity. Hmm... but he spoke of the love of God, the eternal truth about God, when he said, “I am the light of the world and ye also are [the] light of the world.” That means your mind has to be pure and your love has to be deep and then you will understand that light... that light of God, which is shining in everyone of you. Later on, we said “Christians,” but he did not mean Christians [only]. In every man there is that light of consciousness, the light of God. That is the unknown Jesus Christ and that is eternal. But we... out of our own nature, our human nature is animal nature, we have created so many external things in the name of Christ. In the name of the religion we have built big churches. All these things belong to this world. But the real Christ is in the

depth of the human heart. When he says, "I leave my peace" ... "What a man will gain if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" So Jesus Christ says, there is a soul within you, within each of you. And that same soul is in me. That [soul] cannot be felt by your eyes, by your sense organs, by your reading, by your discussion. But your mind has to go. By the grace of God, you can see who I am and that Christ never died. It was necessary for history for him to be captured when he became so popular and began to show some miracles. He cured the sick and even brought to life the dead person. These things are miraculous things. They were necessary for the faith of these ignorant people. These ignorant people cannot understand unless it is presented in a... in an ignorant way. [He laughs lightly with the audience.]

So Christ, knew that he has go. That was his, the known Christ. The known Christ was a Christ of love and compassion, of purity, of great power, at the same time, of great suffering. When we read about the suffering we cannot but cry. Oh, he suffered for us, and that brings a faith. For some people, meditating on the suffering of Christ: when he has been tortured by his own people... tortured by his own people and he's led to carry his own cross and they nailed him there. When we read this story, we cannot but cry, but still he is the known Christ, the Christ, the historical Christ, who was necessary for our faith, for our growth. But among thousands of ignorant people there may be some who can go deep, [some] who can understand what Christ was. And that cannot be spoken. That cannot be spoken. And that Christ is eternal. That Christ does not belong only to the Christian churches.

We all know that our great president of this country, Abraham Lincoln, he was a thorough student of the Bible. He knew by heart many of the important sayings of Lord Jesus Christ, but he refused to join a church. He said, "I am not going to join any church." In order to satisfy his wife who was a devout Christian, he would go to a church in Springfield and sit there. But in his heart he says, "I am not... I will join that church when I shall see that these people follow the saying, the principal saying of Christ, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and all thy soul.' If I see some people are doing that, I shall go into that church." And there's no person available to do that, so he did it himself.

At times his contemporaries... there are many contemporary books about Lincoln and one writer says, "At times Lincoln was quite normal. He was a great... really he was a great statesman. He was a great statesman; he was a congressman at one time, then finally he became president and his great task from the world's point of view was the emancipation of slaves, slavery. That for he said there is a God [Who] has created all men equal. And so for him, slavery was a crime. And through this slavery, eventually he had to declare the Proclamation, that all men are free, all slaves in the [country] are free, the declaration of something that was a great task. But [for] that great task he had to pay [with] his life. He had to... There were... Some southern states were not prepared to accept indivision of the country, and he thought our country has a future. It is not just for cotton states to rule and enjoy prosperity, but then America has a mission in the future. America will be the place for unification of mankind. Many people from many countries will come, even the different

religions, different types of life. They will come here. Time will show. He had that firm conviction of this truth, that this country has a future.

And so he, even though he did not go to the church, sometimes he would go within and some of his contemporary writers speak about him. "There are times we could speak with him. He was fully responsible for his work as the president and as work of the commander in chief. He was so careful and so brave he did not hesitate to scold and replace his generals. And he began to study military books. See? And then he had to pay [with] his life. He was shot by a person. That is how... but at times, the contemporary writer says, he was inapproachable. He was neither the president, he was neither the commander in chief. He was neither the husband. He was neither the father of his children. He was the unknown Abraham Lincoln." But still he was... that truth came. The real truth of God is in the depth of our consciousness. We have to feel that, and we cannot name that God. We cannot create parties in that name of God. We cannot build great churches in the name of that God. This great man, Abraham Lincoln had that experience.

Coming to Jesus Christ he was living with that experiences three or four years of his life. He was so busy. He was reviving the dead people; he was showing some miracles and people became jealous. People became, even his own people wanted to condemn him, and they did condemn him. He was made to carry his own cross and he was crucified. Then other miracles happened after his death and people believed that when people die, they are buried but they will rise again. A messiah will come and he will... by his call every person who is dead will be revived.

And there will... sometimes Christ and his sayings have said certain things. "I am going to make a kingdom for you." They thought it is a kingdom like this, more glorious kingdom, plenty of food and plenty of hmm... [audience laughs] whatever you want in our earthly life. All our desires will be fulfilled there. That was the interpretation, but some people, some people knew better.

Through the ages there were Christian mystics who were afraid because the church became so powerful, the Christian church. The church became the ruler. The church had to dictate everything what you will do, what type of religion you have to live-- one day religion, two days religion. [The first] one [is]: Christ's birthday that we are meeting today. Another day is Christ's disappearance day, the Easter. The only two days. The other days you do anything you like. [He laughs and audience laughs.]

But that was, that was the historical Christ, a person who came, who felt for people. He had no sex consciousness. Men and women were the same to him and he was no earthly vice, earthly crime. But he wanted people to be as pure as possible. By that, they would... one day they would understand who I am. He is that unknown Christ. He is eternal; he belongs to all people, all men. He belongs to Christians; he belongs to non-Christians. He belongs to the whites; he belongs to the black; he belongs to the green. Are there green people anywhere? [Audience laughs.] He belongs to everyone. So in order to understand the real Christ we have to go into the depth of our own consciousness, into our own soul. As Christ says, the soul is most precious than all the wealth you can imagine in this world. We have to go to your own soul.

And when you go to your own soul, you will find a nameless peace, a nameless eternity which in Vedanta we call Sat-Chit-Ananda, the eternal existence, the eternal knowledge and eternal joy. That we can find. That is the real Christ, all the time people are living with the unknown Christ.

Christ the known is known by the study of his life, by following this and coming to the churches, listening to the sermons. That is all right. But Christ did not say that is... we have to stop there. We have to go deeper and deeper and deeper. We have to find that light which is within me and which is within everyone. Everything! The whole world is of that light of Christ, the unknown Christ. We read all these things in the Upanishads, in the Vedic scriptures that there is a unity of conscious, a unity of existence, a conscious existence that we can also find. That is why Christ said, "I leave my peace with you." And that peace will stay. Eternally it will stay. Whoever by thinking about Christ goes deep, he can find in the depth of his heart that unknown Christ. And that unknown Christ will make him immortal. This unknown Christ, we are heirs, each one of us really [an] heir, is really heir to that unknown Christ.

So we did not create dogmas. We did not create hatred. We have to spread the love that has no end, that has no name, but we can experience that. That was the true goal of his life: the true goal of his life to show people to that unknown nameless eternal truth. So in his name those who are earnest we should try to love Christ, but we should be Christ not in name, but in spirit. That is why he said, "I leave my peace with you." And that peace is always there from the time he was born – even before he was born. He said, "Even when there was Abraham, I was there." He was meaning to that eternal God, that nameless God and he was identifying with that nameless God and was telling others that you can also be with this light. This light is not only mine, but is an eternal light.

So that unknown Christ is the unknown foundation of all religions. Not merely Christianity, but all religions were founded in something unknown, something eternal. And that was the unknown Christ. That could also be the unknown... If you worship Rama, if [you] could worship Krishna, the true devotee of Krishna does not quarrel. They, if they touch that real Krishna, then they touch that unknown, which is in the words of the Upanishad "Avan-manasa-gochara"¹ beyond the reach of words and thought there is some eternal reality, nameless reality. And man, is an heir to that reality, to that eternity. That is, we are fortunate that we are... we can by God's grace touch that unknown reality. And that is real freedom. That is real existence.

So, salutation to the Christ of history! Salutation to Christ about whom we read and about whom we talk, but let us not stop [there]. Let us go forward, go forward, go forward till in our life we experience that unknown Christ. That unknown Christ has no death, has no life, has no creed. That is [the] eternal God.

[Closing chant not included on tape.]

1. as cited on <http://www.tirumala.org/prasadam.html> 8/9/12 and other Internet sites with variant spellings. As spoken by Swami Shraddhananda it sounded like "Avan-manaso-gocharam."