

## **“I Long To Be Like Jesus.”**

Text: 2 Pet 1:3-11

Suggested Hymns:

6, 365, 344 ALHB, 320, 361

1) The Divine Source Of This Longing

2) The Energetic Practice Of This Longing

3) The Beautiful Consequence Of This Longing

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Peter 1:3-11, *His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, <sup>4</sup> by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

*<sup>5</sup> But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, <sup>6</sup> to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, <sup>7</sup> to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*

*<sup>8</sup> For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup> for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are preparing for one of the major festivals of the Church. Our eyes are turning to the Christ Child in the manger. For everyone who in faith worshiped at the manger, life became new and glorious.

For example, the shepherds returned from their visit to Bethlehem glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had seen and heard. The Wise Men knelt before the Child of Bethlehem, and faith and love urged them to open their

treasures and present to the Saviour of the Gentiles precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They returned to their Gentile land not only another way, but also to live another life.

And if in faith and love, we follow the Church's Christmas invitation: "*O come, let us adore Him and worship the Lord,*" our life, too, will take on a higher purpose and follow a noble endeavour.

Our text is bursting with deep thought and earnest, loving encouragement. St. Peter was old and expected soon to put off his earthly tabernacle and to go home to his Lord. But as long as he was in his tabernacle, he desired, in the love of his pastoral heart, to remind his Christians of the great things of God and establish them in the truth, and urge them to growth in faith and godliness.

We do not know how many years of grace the Lord will still grant us in the house of our earthly tabernacle, and certainly our concern, as long as we dwell in the flesh, must be that each year we become more and more "*like Jesus, meek, loving, lowly, mild.*" Our theme is "*I Long to Be Like Jesus.*" May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. "I Long to Be Like Jesus" The Divine Source Of This Longing**

This longing and desire dwells in every true Christian's heart, for we are *partakers of the divine nature*. This does not mean that we are God, but it does mean that we have fellowship and partnership with the divine nature.

God has made us participants of His life and dwells and works in us, and He has made our hearts His temple and workshop. He lives in us for a high and noble purpose, that is, our whole being and life will be transformed from glory to glory into the image of the incarnate Son of God.

From day to day and year to year we are to become a little more, and still a little more, like Jesus in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. At the beginning of each day our fervent longing is to put off the old Adam, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and our sincere and holy ambition is to put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.

This longing has been born of God in the hearts of all of His children. With Peter, the servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ, we have *“obtained ... precious faith.”*<sup>1</sup> And this faith is not our merit and work, but a gift of the generosity of the God of all mercy and grace, of all power and might.

Peter and his fellow Apostles never forgot that time when the incarnate Son of God called them to the knowledge of Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. They saw and heard Jesus, and they saw in Him the glory of the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.

They heard His sermons, they were witnesses of His miraculous knowledge and power, and they felt the stamp of Christ’s supernatural power upon their hearts, driving away all the mists of doubt and questionings, and also creating in their souls the heaven-wrought conviction, *“This is the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*<sup>2</sup>

This Christ-centred and Christ-given knowledge of the heart has been given to us all by Christ’s divine power. We have often seen the Virgin-born Christ Child in the manger and heard the angelic Christmas message of great joy, *“For there is born to you this day ... a Savior.”*

We have looked upon the person and life of Jesus as depicted for us, in a glorious panoramic view, by the finger of God in the Gospels. We have been witnesses of His mighty deeds and listeners to His mighty sermons. We have been with Him in the Upper Room, in the moonlit garden of Gethsemane, and on the mournful hill of Calvary. We have gone with Peter and John, on Easter morning, to the garden and found the tomb empty, but in order.

And what we have seen in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, is but the manifestation of the glory and power of God. And this vision of Jesus, like the vision of the resurrected Jesus to Saul on the Damascus Road, has brought us to the doubt-destroying and hell-defying conviction, *“This Jesus is our Saviour and our God.”*

Thus we, like Peter, through the manifestation of the glory and power of Jesus Christ, have been given generous, precious, costly, and great promises — promises which are dearer and more valuable to us than any gift which a person can give and earth can offer.

For what does Christ promise to those who believe in Him? He promises forgiveness to the sinful, rest to the weary, comfort to the sad, hope to the dying, and life for the dead! Jesus who was born for us in the misery and poverty of a stable, lived for us a life of stainless purity and perfect service and love, and died for our sins on the Cross, still lives and reigns in grace, and blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places and at last will come to take us home to Himself.

By this faith and trust in Jesus we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness. By faith in Jesus we are blessed with life, life from God and in God, and we exult with Paul in Galatians 2:20, <sup>20</sup> ***“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***

This means that our life is now hid with God in Christ. ***“For to me, to live is Christ.”***<sup>3</sup> And this life manifests itself in godliness, in pious conduct, in a life in keeping with the moral requirements of God. Christ has given the exceedingly great and precious promises of pardon, comfort, power, and hope in order that we might be partakers of His divine nature and escape from the corruption of the world.

Therefore the person who has been with Jesus and tasted that the Lord is good and experienced the power of Christ in his heart and rejoices in Christ's pardon, life, and hope cries out with soul-born intensity, ***“I long to be like Jesus.”*** Yes, day by day we want to be more like Jesus who has called us from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, year by year wants to be more Christ-like!

Separated from Christ, man, or the world, has no moral hope. All self-made ideals of life, all legislation and law, all efforts of natural culture and moral improvement in the race through moral powers inherent in man, are doomed to dismal failure.

Man becomes either regenerate or degenerate. Outside of Christ, man's moral powers are subject to slow decay and death, the wages of sin. For man is corrupt at the fountain. His heart is a robber's den, full of lust. By nature his life is dominated and controlled by an inordinate affection for earthly things, and

as long as a person's life is centred on the material things of this earth, his moral life will show a progressive decline. Apart from Christ there can be for man nothing but blank despair.

But we by faith are in alliance with Christ, through whom we can do all things, and in His strength we can become more and more like Jesus. That must be the confident hope and prayer for the days that are still to be.

And if we fear, that our life in Christ may lose itself in the vast and often lawless universe of life beneath, the danger is to be averted by seeking greater intensity of spiritual life in deeper and more submissive communion with Jesus in His Word.

The more we look honestly into the face of our blessed Jesus, the more intense and sincere will become our longing and noble and fervent petition:

I long to be like Jesus,<sup>4</sup>  
Meek, loving, lowly, mild,  
I long to be like Jesus,  
The Father's Holy Child.

This longing, with the energetic will, we want to translate into practical, everyday living.

## **2. "I Long to Be Like Jesus"**

### **The Energetic Practice Of This Longing**

The source of practical Christianity is faith, but the fruit of faith is practical Christianity. Therefore the Apostle urges the believers to give all *diligence* to display a kind, generous, unwearied spirit in the practice of the Christian graces.

If we really mean it when we say, "*I long to be like Jesus,*" then we will endeavour to abound, always increasing, in all Christian virtues. We will not be sluggish, idle, lazy, and self-indulgent in spiritual life, but diligently active and honestly concerned about growth in spiritual conduct.

We will not live as worldly as we dare, but as godly as we can in the strength of Christ. Abundantly, lavishly, we should add to faith, *virtue*, the showing of a strong and manly, energetic tone of character. We are not to be "sissies," but grown up, and show forth the heroism of moral courage and conviction, strength and zeal.

In an ungodly environment we must assert ourselves as Christians. In the face of the scoffing and sneers of the worldly, we will regulate our conduct on the basis of the high principles and true ideals of Christ's Moral Law, the Ten Commandments. Resist evil; promote the good; oppose wrong; defend the right — that is Christian manliness.

To *virtue* must be added *knowledge* lest *virtue* degenerate into fanaticism. *Knowledge* signifies understanding, discretion, discernment, in doing the right thing in the right place at the right time. Ill-considered action, although well intended and prompted by godly virtue, may cause resentment and opposition and invite misinterpretation of one's motives. Know Jesus, study His life and actions, and follow Him.

And *to knowledge self-control*. Avoid "*self-indulgence with regard to the passions and appetites of our lower nature, which cannot be indulged without sin.*" Christians must be masters of their tempers, their tongues, their desire for strong drink, and any other lust, or forbidden desire. Christians must be willing even to forego things that are lawful in themselves, if these are hindrances and handicaps in their struggle for eternal life.

*To knowledge self-control*. How many of us are reasonably self-controlled, masters of ourselves? How many of us can control our tempers and our tongues? How about those ugly, cutting remarks we like to say about people at times?

Can we, do we, put our foot down on them? How about those nasty thoughts of envy and jealousy, of hatred and lust, that come creeping, with the trail of the serpent, into our minds, and our hearts? Can we drive them out and keep them out?

How about our troubles? Do we allow misfortunes to settle down on us like a heavy weight to crush the life out of us? Or are we able to say: "*Begone, Satan. You may rob me of my goods, you may crush my body; but you cannot crush my spirit. I am a child of God. I know my Saviour and my destiny.*" Oh, for such self-control!

The next virtue in which we are to become like Jesus is *perseverance*. Jesus endured affliction and the opposition of men with fortitude and high-spirited endurance. The Christian endures and is not turned aside by trial and suffering.

Christian *perseverance* is not a cold endurance, which sternly bears its fate. It is not an unfeeling resignation, which has no hope and is akin to despair.

The *perseverant* Christian remembers his trials. “He says, God knows. God is with me. God means to turn all experiences of my life to my benefit, and *‘the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.’*”<sup>5</sup> A Christian, like Christ, can afford to be perseverant, for after the cross comes the crown, after the night of weeping comes the eternal morning of song.

The next thing in which we are to grow in Christ-likeness is *godliness*, having God and His will in mind in whatever we do or plan and earnestly and conscientiously endeavouring to do our duty to God. As Jesus was obedient to His heavenly Father unto death, even the death of the Cross, we are to live our life in complete submission to the will and wishes of God, not of men.

“*Not my will, but Thine, be done.*” Who can list all the things that God requires of us? Let just us mention a few. God says in John 5:39, “*Search the Scriptures.*” We may be tired. We may not feel like doing it, but we can do it if we make up our minds to do it. And if we will start doing it as a duty, before we are through we will probably find it a pleasure.

The Third Commandment tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Earthly pleasures, trips, parties, may allure and invite, but God’s invitation to worship must come first. How we would all grow in Christ-likeness if we placed God’s will first in our lives!

The worship of God leads to the service of others, and therefore we are urged to show affection towards brethren in the faith, to let the breath of kindness be in all our thoughts and actions and words towards our brothers and sisters in the faith; and not only to them, but let us show our love to all people, even our enemies.

God is love, and therefore love must dominate and control the life of His children. There is so much postponed kindness and love. Let us say it with tokens of appreciation while people are living. Are we as loving and kind as we ought to be in the home, in the office, anywhere?

The Apostle began with faith and ends with love. Faith produces love, love to God and to all people. Faith and love belong together. Let us give all diligence to the deepening of our faith and the development of our character of love, kindness, and all Christian virtues! Truly, it is worth while.

### **3. “I Long to Be Like Jesus”**

#### **The Beautiful Consequence Of This Longing**

Let us consider the consequences of becoming ever more like Jesus. Our text says, <sup>8</sup> *For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Barrenness is a sure symptom of decay. The unfruitful life is the proof of a dead faith. <sup>9</sup> *For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

Our knowledge of Jesus Christ, our faith in Him, urges and compels us never to be satisfied with our progress and advance in Christ-likeness, but deepens our longing to be ever more like Jesus. The person who is barren, unfruitful, has lost his faith. He has lost the forgiveness of sins, and the promise of the life to come.

He is near-sighted. He does not look beyond the transitory material things of this life and world. The perishing things of this world have captivated his mind and heart. The things that are eternal and abiding have vanished from his sight. What pitiful short-sightedness it is to prefer the passing things of this earth to the powers of the world to come!

But if our life is changed from glory to glory into the image of our Saviour, we are making our calling and election sure, we have the proof that in fact and in deed we are called and foreordained children of God.

Our works are proof for the sincerity and genuineness of our Christianity. Only as we walk, haltingly, as it may be, but nevertheless honestly, in the ways of God, can we be certain that we have been called out of darkness into God’s marvellous light and have been translated from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, and from eternity picked out by God to the adoption of sons and everlasting life.

And what a blessing it is, my friends, to be sure that we are Christians and, as such, heirs of eternal life!



The way that leads through the triumphal arch of heaven is the way of faith. By faith we take hold of Christ's merit, which has earned for us entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and by the fruits of faith, our good works, we show that we are pilgrims bound for the heavenly country.

Yes, the blessedness of becoming more and more like Jesus! It gives us the blessed assurance that our faith is not dead, but genuine, that the saving knowledge of Jesus dwells in our heart, that the Holy Spirit has made us His temple, and that we are on our way through the valley of tears to the eternal day of triumph and victory.

May, then, this desire and earnest craving always re-echo in our hearts, "*I long to be like Jesus*" until at last all weakness and frailty will be done away with and we shall be with Jesus and be like Him, without any spot or blemish or any such thing, and see Him face to face.<sup>6</sup> Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter 1:1

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 16:16

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 1:21

<sup>4</sup> Hymn 344 ALHB verse 4

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:18

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 3:2