

The Image of Jesus Christ

by Bill McLeod

The sermon emphasizes the importance of embodying the character of Jesus Christ in our lives as we strive to be His true followers.

Duration: 29:08

Scripture: Exodus 3:11, Matthew 11:28, Matthew 23:37, Acts 10:38, Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 10:1, 2 Timothy 2:24, 1 John 3:1-2

Topics: "Jesus Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of imitating the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He references how Jesus wept over Israel and highlights the significance of expressing emotions, even for believers. The speaker shares a personal experience of sharing the gospel with a rough-looking man and encourages believers to share their faith without worrying about the reaction. The sermon also discusses the concept of believers being called the sons of God and the future hope of being like Christ. The speaker references 1 John 3:1 and Romans 8 to support the idea that God's plan for believers is to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Transcript

Well, good morning. It's a good morning. Thank God for it.

I want to read from 1 John, chapter 3, verse 1. It says, Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved? The word beloved means divinely loved ones.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure.

So God's plan for us is that someday we'll be like Christ, right? Well, that's what it said. And then we have in Romans 8, 20, pardon me, Romans chapter 8, I forget the verse number, but we understand he says, We have been predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. So God has chosen us not to be carried to heaven in an armchair, but to be like Christ.

That's what it says. Then 1 Peter 1, there's a verse that says, We have been elected to obedience. So he called us to be an obedient child.

And then in Ephesians 1, 4, he chose us to be holy and without blame before him in love. And we need to keep these things in mind, dear people, or we may have a wrong idea of what God has in mind. We are predestined, I say, to be conformed to the image of his Son, Romans 8, 29.

Okay? So God wants us as his children to be totally conformed to the image of his Son, which means it's necessary that we know what Christ was like in order to be moving in the right direction. Christ in the Garden of Eden created animals, birds, fish, which tells me he likes birds, animals, and fish, and so should we. It's just a thought.

But remember, he was born in a manger and he rode on a donkey. Not too proud to ride on a donkey. He loved children.

Much is said about that. And warnings given to those who offend a child that believes in God. Strong warning in that connection.

He loved children. Matthew 18. There are several verses in that one chapter that speak about his love for children.

When mothers brought their children to Jesus, the disciples tried to chase them away. They thought, this is nothing. Why are they bringing these kids here? But he rebuked the disciples, laid his hands on those children, and he blessed them.

He highly respected women. Not many people know this, although we all should know it. Luke chapter 8. There were many women that ministered to Christ of their substance.

And some of these were women who had been possessed by demons, and Christ had healed them. And they formed some kind of a troop, and wherever he went, they went. In other words, multitudes of people following Christ because they wanted to see the miracles.

And Christ said to one group, You seek me not because you saw the miracles, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. You want to have the right attitude in thinking of the works of Christ. You know, when he talked to the Samaritan woman, six husbands, can you believe it? She must have been the first Hollywood actress.

He didn't say to her, you're a rotten sinner on the road to hell. That's not how he approached her. And sometimes our approach is not right.

He said to her, go and call your husband. And she was embarrassed. I have no husband.

That's right, he said. You had five, and the one you have now is not your husband either. Later on, she testified that he told me everything I'd ever done.

But that's how it started. Go and call your husband. There's different ways of dealing with sinners, and sometimes we're too brusque, too hard.

You have to approach them on the right level, and then say what needs to be said. John 8, the adulteress, what did he say to her? He didn't rebuke her for her adultery. She had been shamefully exposed.

Where was the man? The law of Moses said, if adultery was committed, both the man and the woman should die. And these guys, they brought her. So I say, where was the man? They were not, you know,

they were putting women down, really, is what they were doing.

Christ didn't do that. He said gently to her, go. Has no man condemned you? She said, no man, Lord.

Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more. There's different ways, I say, of telling a sinner he's a sinner.

You can do it by asking questions. But be careful with your initial approach, or you may turn them away before you have a chance to tell them anything. In 1 Timothy 5, we're told to treat older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, and with purity.

That's made quite clear there. We have a verse, 1 Corinthians 7, one is good for a man, not to touch a woman. Your mother, yes, your sister, yes, your wife, yes, but not beyond that.

That's what it says, 1 Corinthians 7, one. He ate, Christ ate with publicans and sinners. Did you ever do that? You know, Jeff Gowdy used to tell me, you know this, he used to go to the restaurant and look for a sinner he could sit with and talk to.

Have you ever done that? Well, that's a good thing to do. There's lots of sinners around. You don't have to look far to find them.

And sometimes we should be doing things of that kind, just witnessing to sinners. They thought they were putting him down by saying, he eats with publicans and sinners. I'm sure he felt good when he heard it because he had come to save sinners.

The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. And as Paul said, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Don't be afraid of sinners.

Spend some time with them when you can. And if God puts a sinner in your path, thank the Lord, take advantage. It's neat, you know, talking to sinners.

You never know. You've never seen this guy before. You have no idea what the reaction will be, and that's not important.

Just share with him. You can do it by asking questions. As I mentioned before, I've done it that way.

Well, just recently we were at Gimli with a couple. And they went for a long walk, and I'm not part of the long walks, so I said I would sit. So I sat down, and about 20 feet from me there was an older man sitting.

He was only 64, actually, but he looked older. And God told me just to go and talk. So I sat down beside him, and I said, How are you doing? Not good, he said.

Not good. So I talked to him about the Lord. And he was a real rough, tough-looking specimen, but he sat there and listened.

And he didn't quit listening as long as I was talking. It was interesting. I'm praying for him, that he might be saved.

You've heard me talk about Spurgeon in a great sermon he brought. The sermon was entitled, Sinners. That was it.

Sinners. And he was instructing Christians. There are sinners everywhere.

How dumb can you get? Why aren't you talking to them? They're all around you on the streets. Everywhere you go there are sinners. Look for them.

Thank God for them. Some of them will be saved. Get in there.

Don't be afraid to be found with sinners. All right. Jesus did.

It says about Jesus, in one case, Acts 10, 38. And you know, this struck me not too long ago as being very unusual. He went about, it says.

He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil. For God was with him. Ever think of Jesus that way? He went about doing good.

If you go about doing good, ever look for people you can help? That's an important ministry. God often puts people in our path that need help. Maybe we're too busy to help.

We should never be unless the mission we're on is extremely important. It says he had compassion ten times. The compassion of Jesus was mentioned.

And we should have a compassionate heart if we're going to be like him. A compassionate heart. It means a heart that is easily touched, perhaps easily broken, that can sympathize with those who are weeping.

Weep with those that weep. Rejoice with those that rejoice. That's part of it.

Remember, we're thinking of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Now, he challenged evil systems, right? He was very hard. You remember in the temple how he went in there and just took over, upset the tables of the money changers, and chased the people out that were selling birds and stuff? And he gave them a hard time.

My house, he said, shall be called a house of prayer for all people, and you've made it a den of thieves. And so he had. So we should take a stand against corruption in the life around us where we can.

And sometimes he was hard on evil people, especially on hypocrites, people pretending to be what they really are not. Do you know where the word hypocrite comes from? It means an actor on the stage of life. A hypocrite is acting a part.

He isn't what he seems to be. He smiles, but maybe he hates. And so, Jesus in Matthew 23 especially, but not only there, he vented his wrath on the hypocrites again and again.

I think the word hypocrite occurs, is it nine times in that chapter? And there's always a wall connected with it. He hates hypocrites because they're pretending to be what they really are not. And that can happen in churches sometimes as a Christian.

We act like a Christian in public, but perhaps not in private. I remember witnessing to a lady one time, and she said, I'm a Roman Catholic. I'm married to a born-again Christian.

But she said, if becoming a Christian means becoming like my husband, count me out. And then she told me about times when he'd lose his temper and several times she'd have to run to the Salvation Army for protection from her husband. And yet in talking with him, he was the sweetest talking Christian you ever

heard.

All the words were right, but he was wrong. Hard to figure out an actor. The hypocrite's hope will perish, the Bible says.

If he has a hope, after death it'll perish. It won't be there. Be what you are, and don't pretend to be what you're not.

I say because he hates evil systems and he hates hypocrites. They can be saved, thank God. And most of us, I'm sure possibly all of us at some time, have played the part of a hypocrite to avoid an unpleasant situation or whatever we had in mind.

Now Paul spoke about, you see they were criticizing Paul because he was such a soft guy. He wept easily, warning everyone night and day with tears, he said. And so they were writing him off.

He didn't have the flesh and fire that Peter had, or the intensity that Apollos had. And so he said, brethren, I beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He was trying to get them to see that he was trying to copy Christ, to be conformed to the image of Christ.

That's an extremely important thing, the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Do you remember how Jesus said to Israel, how often, he was weeping as he said it, how often will I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings? And you would not. Your house is left unto you desolate.

He's weeping as he told them. And there's times I remember counseling with people who told me they hadn't wept in 40 years. They didn't know how to do it even.

Well, we should learn, because again, to weep with those that weep and to have a compassionate heart. David once said in Psalm 18, Your gentleness has made me great. He's talking about God's gentleness.

God is very gentle with us, right? Don't I hear an amen? What's your experience been? Mine has certainly been. God has been very gentle. He stops me.

He moves me. But he's very gentle, because his heart is that way. Paul, you know, spoke about being a nurse, being a father.

I was gentle among you, he said, and he was. And sometimes as Christians, we're just entirely too harsh. We don't have the heart of God.

We don't have time for people. We have two ears, but we don't listen. And we have one tongue.

We talk a lot. It's not the way the Lord Jesus would have us to be. In Deuteronomy 18, twice, Moses said it, and then God said it, that he was going to send a prophet.

And he would be, Moses said, like me. And God said he'd be like Moses. It's in the same chapter.

So what was Moses like? We're told he was the meekest man on the earth. Every time he was challenged, he fell on his face on the ground. And I suppose lifting one hand and just saying, God, you take over, you don't think of him that way because you think of Mount Sinai on fire, thundering and shaking and all of that.

But he was the meekest man on earth. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. If God for adventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

You're not to get into arguments. Avoid that with a plague like it's a plague. Get off it.

You're to be gentle with people and in meekness like Moses, like Christ. You know in Matthew 11 when Christ said, Come unto me, all you that labor under heavy laden, and I will give you rest. In South America, in Chile, we saw a grotto with a statue of the Virgin Mary probably 30 or 40 feet high and a little gate in the front.

And they had for years a text hanging under the Virgin Mary. And it was a quotation from Matthew 11. Come unto me.

Come unto Mary. She'll give you rest. No, no.

Come to Christ. But you know we stopped too soon in Matthew 11. Come unto me, all you that labor under heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

And then it says, Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. People, it's not just coming to Christ and finding relief from our sins. We're to go beyond that.

Learn of me, he said. Learn. Learn what? I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.

So it's not just coming to Christ that does it. After we come to Christ, we have to learn from Christ. Yoke, take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

Now become a meek and a lowly person, not easily provoked, walking patiently as Jesus would have us to walk. He's called a tender shepherd in Isaiah 40, gently leading those with young. We Christians are pregnant with spiritual young.

God can use anybody to win others to Christ if we try trusting him. Interestingly, in Luke chapter 2, when Jesus' parents rebuked him, he went down with them to Nazareth, and it says, he was subject unto them. The creator of the universe was subject to two earthly parents.

Does that teach us something? I think it should. To respect our parents and to love them, pray for them, encourage them. In Proverbs it says, you're not to despise your mother when she's old.

Why does it say that? Because when she gets old, she might start forgetting things and do things that she normally would not have done. You're not to despise her because you'll likely be the same when you get her age. Right? You're not to despise.

As a matter of fact, there are strong warnings in the Bible in a number of places about mistreating your parents. So, Jesus honored his parents until age 30, and then, of course, went public as the Son of God. You know, when Jesus was on trial, he never defended himself.

Do you know why? Because in Isaiah 53, it says, he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He had nothing to say, no defense to give.

Pilate marveled.

Herod couldn't understand it. That's part of being, like, conformed to Christ also. We don't have to defend ourselves because we're instructed to give our cause to God.

That's how David handled it when he was being chased by Saul in the wilderness. And he warned Saul, I put my case into God's hands. And God certainly saw him through.

It was hard and dangerous at times, but finally, he got all the way through by the grace of God. So, the soldiers, when they were nailing him on the cross, he might have said, listen, you guys, I'm going to roast you in hell for a million years for doing what you're doing to me. Not a word.

Not even a word. Rather, hanging on the cross in extreme agony, he said, Father, forgive them. They know not what they're doing.

How could he do that? We get accused sometimes, and sometimes we reply in like measure. He didn't. We shouldn't.

He endured, it says, such contradiction of sinners against himself. He just endured it quietly. And then he endured the cross.

It's an awful thing, you know, to be nailed on a cross because of Jewish law. That's equivalent to being hanged on a tree. And he that is hanged is accursed of God.

And he knew that. But he endured it for your sake and for my sake also. Peter in Acts chapter 3, when he was talking to the nation about crucifying Christ, he said, I know that you did it ignorantly.

And he preached the gospel, and I think on that occasion there were 5,000 found Christ. So I was thinking the other day, these mobs, thousands of people crowding around Christ, where were they the day when Christ was crucified? They weren't around. Maybe they were standing far off, expecting Him to work some miracle of deliverance.

I don't know. But they seemingly were not there. And then remember again, I Timothy 1.13, Paul said, I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

And so that's a factor that certainly must be considered also. You know, I love reading Acts 9. Now, he had killed Paul, Saul of Tarsus. He had had many people killed, many people cast into prison.

He bore witness against many Jews who had become Christians. And how does God handle it? Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? That was kind of gentle, wasn't it? Shouldn't he have jumped on him and thrashed him to death? No. Paul, why are you persecuting me? And trembling in astonishment, Saul said, Who are you? I am Jesus, whom you have crucified.

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