

Appearance and Reality

by James Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a Christian, pursuing eternal life, conforming to Christ, and possessing real religion, as these are the only dignified, grand, and substantial things in life.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 51:10, John 1:12, John 4:24, John 17:3, Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 5:22, James 1:27

Topics: "Eternal Values", "Christian Identity"

Description

James Smith preaches about the importance of looking beyond appearances and focusing on eternal values. He emphasizes that true dignity is found in being a Christian, who is a child of God with a glorious inheritance and a close relationship with the Creator. Smith highlights that the grand pursuit in life should be eternal life in God's favor and presence, and the ultimate goal is to attain conformity to Christ. He stresses that the only substantial thing that truly satisfies is real religion, which brings peace, joy, and transformation to the heart and life.

Transcript

We are all too much taken up with appearances. We do not look beneath the surface as we should. A title, a grand equipage, a good name, large property, a splendid house, fine dress, or popular applause--attract our attention, win our admiration, and even at times excite our envy! But it should not be so. Many are titled on earth--who are despised in heaven. Many ride to hell in fine carriages--while many of the poor trudge on foot to heaven. Many are commended by creatures--who are condemned by the Creator. Many have worldly wealth--who are strangers to the true riches. Many live in splendid houses on earth--for whom no mansion is prepared in heaven. Many who clothe their bodies in purple and fine linen--will find their souls naked when they come to appear before God. And many who are applauded now--will be accused and condemned for eternity. Let us not judge, then, according to appearance--but let us judge righteous judgment.

The only dignified being on earth is a Christian. All others are traitors against God's crown, rebels against God's government, and are under sentence of eternal damnation. They are spared for a time--but unless grace prevents, they will surely perish forever. They are opposed to God, at enmity with God, and constantly provoke God.

But a Christian is God's child, the Savior's brother, the Holy Spirit's temple. He has a new nature, a new name, and a glorious inheritance. God walks with him, angels minister unto him, and a mansion in heaven

is being prepared for him. He is clothed with God's righteousness, influenced by God's grace, and guided by God's wisdom. All that God does--has reference to him; all that God has provided--is made over to him; and all that God is--is promised to him! So that he can sing in the darkest day, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I hope in him."

For him God entered into covenant before time. For him God delivered up his only begotten Son. For him God has made so many, exceeding great, and precious promises. For him Providence works, and for him the world stands. He is taken into the closest union to God, he is constituted the child and friend of God, he is intended to be associated with God for ever. For him a crown is prepared, to him a throne is promised, and on him inconceivable glory will be conferred.

The Christian, therefore, is the dignified creature--and the Christian, alone! Let it therefore be my object and aim, to be not merely a professor of Christ's religion--but a possessor of Christ--a Christian in deed and in truth.

The only grand pursuit is eternal life! Many are in pursuit of riches, fame, and pleasure. But if they become rich--they will not necessarily be happy. Indeed very few rich people know what true happiness is. If they become famous among men--they may be wretched in themselves. If they live in the midst of pleasure--they may know nothing of satisfaction. Yes, they may amass wealth, acquire fame, and enjoy carnal pleasure for a time--and then perish for ever.

Only one thing demands our attention, one thing deserves our regard, one thing should be the object of our pursuit, and that one thing is--Eternal Life. Life in God's favor. Life in God's presence. Life in the enjoyment of God's love. Life like that which the angels live. Life like that which the Savior enjoys. Life in the highest and holiest sense of the term. The life which God promised before the world began. The life which Jesus came to confer on his sheep. The life after which our heart sighs and pines for. Life which consists in the knowledge of God, in the service of God, and in the enjoyment of God!

This life is set before us to attract our attention, to excite our desires, to draw forth our hopes, and to employ our efforts. The gospel, therefore, sets eternal life before us, calls us to possess it, and promises it to every overcomer. Oh, may it be the chief object of my life to secure a title to it, enjoy the foretastes of it--and look forward to death as my introduction to it! The only grand pursuit, or the only object worthy the pursuit of an immortal being, is--Eternal Life!

The only great attainment is conformity to Christ. The Lord Jesus is the great model of all excellency. All Divine and human beauty meet and shine forth in him. Of him it was testified while he dwelt below, that he was "holy, harmless, undefined, separated from sinners." To his image, God predestined all his people to be conformed. To make us like him--is the great end of the Spirit's work within us, and all the dispensations of Divine Providence towards us. And one grand evidence of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts--is a habitual, hearty, growing desire to be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one ever had a view of Christ by faith--who did not possess a burning desire to be like Christ; for the effect of seeing Jesus by faith, is an unquenchable desire to be conformed to Christ. The gospel reveals Christ--Christ reveals the Father--Faith, as the eye of the soul fixes upon Christ, and takes in correct views of the Father; then the working of grace is revealed by an imitation of Christ. Hence the Apostle says, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord--are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Holy Spirit, through the gospel, conform me to Jesus! I ask not to be wealthy, famous among men, or to be indulged with the pleasures of time; but I do ask, and ask right earnestly to be conformed to the image of Christ; for I do confess, that the only great attainment is conformity to Christ.

The only substantial thing is real religion. Satan knows this, and therefore he has invented many false ones. The religion of human nature is a poor thing; it is light, evanescent, a mere form. But the religion of God is solid, substantial, and abiding. It has its seat in the heart, it rules the affections, and it controls the whole man. It brings us to God, makes us one with God, and stamps upon us the likeness of God. True religion is devout--but not gloomy; heavenly, and yet a blessing in the world. There is no rock on which the soul can rest, no pillow on which the soul can repose, no fountain at which the soul can drink and be satisfied--but real religion. Everything short of this is fleeting, fading, and unsatisfactory.

Oh, for the religion of the heart! That religion which brings peace to the conscience, rest to the troubled spirit, and joy to the sorrowful soul. That religion which informs the intellect, renews the heart, and transforms the life. Holy Spirit, it is yours to make man truly pious, you alone can take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh; let it please you to renew me in the spirit of my mind, to adorn me with all your gifts and graces, and make me resemble my beloved Lord!

Reader, what about you?

Do you think that the only dignified being on earth is a Christian?

Do you think that the only grand pursuit is eternal life?

Do you think that the only great attainment is conformity to Christ?

Do you think that the only substantial thing is real religion?

If so--do you possess them? Are you a real Christian?

Is eternal life the grand object of your daily pursuit?

Have you attained in any measure to conformity to Christ?

Have you real religion?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-smith/appearance-and-reality/>

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