

As He Is So Are We

by Vance Havner

Vance Havner's sermon emphasizes the believer's identity in Christ and the call to live authentically in a world that often opposes Christian values.

Duration: 33:40

Scripture: John 21:18

Topics: "Living Like Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher highlights the issue of focusing on minor things and neglecting the major aspects of the Christian faith. He criticizes the performance-oriented approach in churches and emphasizes the need for a genuine spiritual experience. The preacher shares examples of a Christian leader who was disappointed with a dry and lifeless meeting and missionaries in Korea who were deeply impacted by the message of God's love. The sermon also explores the concept of Jesus being alive and present in the world, contrasting his resurrection with the temporary nature of earthly achievements. The preacher concludes by referencing the book of Revelation and the promise of a future without suffering or limitations.

Transcript

Nine little words that fall apart into three divisions of three words each. And they're their own outline, you don't have to have an outline. They're in 1 John 4, 17, and they're read this way, As he is, so are we in this world.

That just takes care of itself, doesn't it? You don't have to have an outline for that. As he is, not as he was. There's only one thing that Jesus ever was.

He was dead, but he's not dead now. And between the eternity of yesterday that never had a beginning, and the eternity of tomorrow that'll never have an end, stands Jesus Christ, the same. I'm sure that when they laid that battered and beaten and bleeding body away, Pilate and Herod and Caiaphas must have rubbed their hands and said, well, that takes care of him.

But it didn't. He took care of himself. They had put a big stone in front of that sepulcher, they had put a seal on it, and they had put soldiers to guard it.

But neither seals nor stones nor soldiers make a bit of difference when a mighty angel comes down from heaven, and he rolled that stone away. And I like the touch of, well, to me, humor in it. I like the way the Holy Spirit puts in some of these little sidelights.

He not only rolled the stone away, he sat on it. Got up there and said, now look who's in charge around here. Oh, I just love that.

I don't know much about the details of the sepulcher. You know, they claim that they know where it is, and the one they show you is it, but I'm not sure. It doesn't make a lot of difference anyhow.

But before Abraham was, he didn't say, I was. I am. He's the eternal contemporary.

John had an advantage on all of us. He showed Jesus three different ways, in the flesh, in his resurrection body, and in his glorified body. And that vision, that view of him knocked him out.

And Jesus said, cheer up. I was here before there ever was anything to be afraid of. I'll be here after everything you're scared of is gone.

And you know, if we could some Sunday morning have just a wee bit of a glimpse of the glorified Christ, I think he'd knock us out too. And I know one thing, we wouldn't go out the church door saying a lot of the silly things we do say when we go out of the house of God. It overcame him, and certainly it might.

And Jesus said, in effect, John, I'm here to show you the pageant of what's to come. Now, it's worth spending a while on Patronus to see that. And he showed him all that was going to happen, all clear to the last.

Poor old John had been sitting there looking at water, water, water in every direction, not a drop to drink. He'd been a terrible life. Plenty of sea, plenty of sea to see, you know.

And then Jesus, in the very last picture on all that screen, said, the new Jerusalem came down, and there was no more sea. And I think old John must have said, Lord, that's the best thing you've said yet. I sure do appreciate no more sea.

It's all gone. Well, all the world's messiahs are dead. Mohammed and Buddha and Confucius, they're all gone.

We don't visit the grave of a dead messiah. He's not in it anyway. No mortal can with him compare.

Among the sons of men, fairer is he than all the fair who fill the heavenly train. The infinitude of Jesus Christ never puts him in the past tense, somebody has said. He always is.

Not he was. As he is, so are we. Now, there is something said.

You mean us? Yes, it says so. Not in degree, but in kind. If you're a Christian, if you're a partaker of the divine nature, it doesn't say, so should we be.

Look at it carefully. It doesn't say, so we may be. It doesn't say, so we shall be.

It says we are. As he is, now we are in this present world. In the Christian, Christ lives again.

To me, to live is Christ. And our position down up there and our condition down here ought to match. Oh, but you say, I don't see many people by the slightest resemblance to Jesus Christ.

Well, maybe you don't. I don't see too many of them. But maybe you've just been looking at church members.

And that's not a guarantee of anything. You know, Paul had two nurseries in his church at Corinth. He had one for the sure enough babies, and he had another for the 40-year-old babies and above.

And that's the most troublesome crowd after all. The 40-year-old babies, you know, they've been fed pabulum so long, petted so long, hardest crowd on earth to please, let a new preacher come along, and they say, I don't like him, he changed my formula. Well, a baby wouldn't talk like that, wouldn't it? After all, it takes four things to grow a boy, and it takes three things to grow a Christian, food, rest, and exercise.

That's all. You can't leave out any one of them, grow up a boy or a girl or a Christian, feed on the Word of God, rest in the Word, exercise yourself unto Godliness. Paul wrote in Galatians 4.19 about my little children, of whom I travel in birth again unto a Christ be formed in you, as he is, so are we.

If only we'd be what we are. That is one thing that occupies a lot of my time, trying to get God's people to be what they are. Ron, you said something, I don't know where or when, but a long time ago, and I heard it, to the effect, and I quote it as nearly as anybody ever quotes you or me or anybody else, but you said, if all these church members, if you're all the soul of the earth, why is it in such a, well, I don't know the adjective you use, miserable condition, anyhow, and if we've got this much light in the world, according to our church member statistics, why is everything so dark? Now, that's well said.

I know the world's not going to be converted in this age, but it ought to be better than it is on account of us being here. We ought to make some influence on it, as he is, so are we. We can just be that.

You don't have to be queer, go around with a great big butt and say, I'm a Christian, carrying a Bible as big as the Sears and Roebuck catalog. You don't have to do that to people. Just be one.

The world will get around. It'll get around. They'll find out, they'll say something's come over him, her, not living like they used to, as he is, so are we, in this world, of all people and in all places in this world.

It ought to be better than it is, not in church, nothing to say there, not where it's not very difficult to look pious on Sunday morning, not just in some favored spot in seclusion from the maddened crowd's ignoble strife, some Shangri-La with some gurus droning out his platitudes. He didn't say that, but in this old foul, polluted, perverted Sodom and Gomorrah, right there in the middle of it, so are we. This old rat race, these old salt mines, every day in the week, so are we.

God's people are on toward promotion of the world to come, his servants will serve him there. I expect to work in heaven. I'm not looking for an eternal vacation.

I've never had many in my life. I'm not interested. I don't want to sit on a cloud and pluck a harp all eternity.

I want to do something, and the Lord's going to give me something to do. And if your Christian life won't work here, it's not worth having, if it won't do anything for Jesus. Jesus lived here for 30-odd years, and as he is, so are we in this world.

John 17, do you realize that John said more about the world than anybody else in the Bible? You wouldn't have thought John would do it, but the cosmos, which we get cosmology and cosmogony and even cosmetics, and it's all tied up with that word, and he has a lot to say about it. In the high priestly prayer of our Lord in John 17, Jesus said a few things that will forever locate you about worldliness. You don't hear much preaching anymore on worldliness.

That's not because we got any less of it. We never had more of it than we've got now. It's not very fashionable to talk about it.

Folks won't appreciate it. Somebody might walk out of the church. So we don't say much about that over the country at large, but Jesus said you've been saved out of the world, you're still in the world, but you're not of the world.

But you've been saved out of the world to go right back into the world, to win people out of the world, and that's the only business you've got in this world. Now you ever get that straight, you'll be located, friend. Read it.

Go home and get out that 17th chapter of John and make a red line everywhere it says. He said so much about that in one of the verses in John, you have the word world five times in one verse. Now that's a record because he was interested in our getting properly related to this world.

And we're not. We don't call it worldliness anymore. Secularism, which is the practice of the absence of God, somebody is saying.

And now it's humanism, which is big me, I'm God. First thing the devil said to our parents in the Garden of Eden, you shall be as God. And the last one, the Antichrist, is to claim to be God.

So that's where we are in that stage in between. Well, I grew up in the woods, practically, in western North Carolina. Some people think I never come out, I don't know.

But I grew up there. And I don't like to live in motels and ride on planes. I'm not doing this for fun, friend.

If I had my way about it, I'd spend more time writing and get as secluded and far away from all as I possibly could. I said, let me walk in the fields. God said, no, live in the town.

I said, there are no flowers there. He said, no flowers but a crown. I said, but the sky is dark and there's nothing but noise and din.

And he wept as he sent me back. There's more, he said, there's sin. And because there is, you've got to be out in the middle of whether you like it or not, ministering to the need of the hour.

And because that's the way it is, as he is, so am I in this world. And that's the way he was. He had a hard time down here, friends.

He left us a legacy, a heritage, I don't pretend to understand, over at Colossians 1.24 means, where Paul says that we have the sufferings of Christ, a leftover of his sufferings, for us. Now what that means, certainly not for sin, because he bore the price of sin. But he has left us a heritage of suffering.

Do you know anything about that? I almost have a chill when I see well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed Americans standing on Sunday morning in church, singing at the top of their voices sometimes, to the old

rugged cross, I'll ever be true. It's shame and reproach. Gladly, there.

I feel like saying, here we go again. Lord have mercy on us. Faith of our fathers, we'll be true to thee to death, that Sunday morning.

Most of them not true enough to get back to the evening service, Sunday night. There's a lot of hypocrisy in this sort of business. My wife's favorite little song was not one of the classics, though she liked that kind of music.

But it was that little quartet number, This World Is Not My Home, by Mona Passing through. This world has never been kindly disposed toward Jesus Christ, never will be. You say, well, if he'd come back today, we'd treat him better.

We wouldn't do any such thing. If you were to, you want to find out how it is, you try being a genuine Christian a week, and you will find out that you are not white sheep among black sheep, you are sheep among wolves. That's what he called them, I didn't call them that.

And that's what you're in the midst of today, if you live for Jesus Christ, we're in a generation of wolves. The culture today, that's what it is. What was Jesus like in this world? Some preachers would give you the impression that he went about crying, he didn't disturb anybody.

Bless your heart, he was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. He said, I came not to send peace, but the sword. I came to divide families, one member against another.

He said that, and he does, by reason of the facts, some will be loyal to him and some won't. And they were offended in him. I read, does this offend you? Yes.

He created a crisis everywhere he went. You had to take sides, one way or the other. And he offended the religionists, the crowd that led the movement that put him on the cross, went to church, read the Bible, prayed in public, all of them tithers, lived separated lives, tried to win others and went to hell.

That's the crowd that caused him more trouble than anybody else on the face of the earth. And he called them hypocrites, play actors. That's what the word means.

You're acting it, like the children praying funeral and wedding, he told about, they're just going through the motions, playing church. It was the religious crowd, he ate the publicans and sinners in that crowd, except the poor ignorant crowd among some of the Romans on the outer fringe, but it was the Jewish religious leaders started this thing. And he told them, you strain out an app and swallow a camel.

You magnify things not worth it and you minimize things. We do a lot of that today. We get excited over things not worth getting all that ahead of about it.

It's like a man going around swatting mosquitoes with a sledgehammer. Never try to swat mosquitoes with a sledgehammer. You'll bust up all the furniture, knock all the window panes out, and you'll do the same thing in the religious world.

Go around with a small swatter if you've got to do it, but don't take a sledgehammer. Some folks just wear themselves out on things like that. Then we've got the new brand of preachers, the prosperity gospel preachers.

Be a Christian, you'll be a millionaire. It won't work. Now sometimes there are Christian millionaires, but I was brought up.

Any of you old folks remember the Horatio Alger little books? I see a few in my bracket back there that remember them. Well, they're all alike. A boy starts working in a store and falls in love with the boss's daughter and marries her and gets to be president of the thing.

It always ends the same way, awfully boring, but we ate it up in those days. Wonderful in a way. And that was a sort of school of positive thinking back in those days.

But my friends, they don't all come off that well. Some people can get rich and be a Christian. I don't know how to do it.

I didn't have that experience myself. But do you realize that among all the heroes of faith there were two kinds? One of them just marched over everything. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the age of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, women received their dead raised to life again, and all of a sudden stops right in the middle of it, says, but others, and others were tortured.

Just the good people not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others had trial of cruel markings and scourges, bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned.

And listen to this, if you ever, don't try to imagine it's too blood curdling to think of, sawn asunder. What kind of dying that must be you can't even conjure in imagination. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy.

Wandered in deserts and mountains and dens, caves of the earth, and these all having obtained a good report through faith. They were just as good as the others, but they didn't fare so well. So if you start out and instead of getting rich, your blood pressure goes up, your bank account goes down, and you don't know what's going to happen to you.

Well, remember they didn't all fare that way, my friend. I know some mighty good people that are having so much trouble that you can't believe. Well, are they Christians? Yes, and very good ones too.

But out of the leading characters in the New Testament, most of them died violent deaths. Paul, Peter, James, John the Baptist, and my Lord tops the list. Violent deaths.

God didn't say to Paul, now you've been faithful and I'm going to remember you and put you on a pension and you can get you a little villa down on the Riviera and write you a memoir. That's not the way it is in my book. Sitting around there waiting to have his head chopped off.

So when you hear these fellows say that you'll get rich if you're a Christian, well, you will get rich in the Lord, but I'm not making any promises about anything else. There was a young man from Kilpican whose nose was as red as a beacon, but by saying it's white thirty times day and night, he cured it and became an archdeacon. I don't believe that.

Have a bit of faith in that. Medals. Everybody wants medals today, but nobody wants any scars.

We got more medals than we've got scars today. What scars have you ever suffered for Jesus? What is the reproach of the old rugged cross? It's the trouble that you have that you wouldn't have if you weren't a Christian. Have you had any persecution, criticism? It has to be something.

What is the reproach, the scorn of being a follower of the Lamb? That's what it is. Amy Carmichael put it this way. No hidden scar on feet or side or hand.

I hear thee sung as mighty in the land. I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star. Yet as the master shall the servant be, and pierced are the feet that follow me, but thine are whole.

Can he have followed far who has no wound, no scar? That just puts me under conviction every time I read that. I've got a new song out. I don't know exactly how the words go, but the point is everybody wants to sit at the table.

Nobody wants to work in the field. That's a good one. They'll all show up at the communion.

They don't do anything for the Lord. The trouble today is that it is pretty well illustrated by National Geographic some time ago, and they're showing pictures of Rome. They said, this is the coliseum where early Christians died for a faith they now take for granted.

Wow. That ought to put us in our place. And that's about the truth about it.

What used to be fundamental, beloved, has become incidental. It doesn't matter much. I can't help getting bothered about this sort of thing.

We're majoring on the minor and minoring on the major, and we're not having an experience. We're putting on performances in church. I think of that Christian leader who went to one of these dry, dead, dull, dismal meetings one time, and the longer it went on, the worse off he got.

He finally just got on his knees, I think, and said, Lord, this just can't be it. You ever have a spell of feeling that way? You ought to. I think of those missionaries over in Korea who preached and then said, now the meeting's over, and nobody left.

They said, you've got to go home and get your rest. And a spokesman said, how can we go? He told us that God so loved the world, he sent his son. If we trust him, we could live forever.

How can you sleep after hearing that? We'd go to sleep listening to it. All over America. The thing that bothers me today, I used to go down to Hampton-DuBose Academy in Florida a lot.

It was a home for missionaries' children, and in those days, missionaries had to leave their children there and go to the field and not see them, maybe until they were half-grown. Now talk about a heart twister, that was it. Now today, they fly over in a few hours.

They're living over there. I asked one the other day, who does turn out to be, who's got the ruggedness for it in this generation, I've been wondering, I said, have we got whatever it took then to say goodbye to that kid and not see him again for years? You remember when Simeon held the baby Jesus in his hands, he said, this child shall be for a sign that will be popular and successful. No, a sign that shall be spoken against.

You had any of that? And when the Jews wanted Paul to tell us about your religion, everywhere we go, we hear it's spoken against. My soul, we're wearing ourselves out to try to make it popular. We do everything in the sun to make the gospel likable.

The Bible doesn't say anything about that. I get bothered about it. I think about those immortal lines of one of our best writers, John Peterson wrote this, and they've got a new song to the same tune, it's in your Baptist book, I think, but a new tune, and the words are all right, I'm not criticizing it, but they don't say what this says.

So send I you to labor unrewarded, to serve unpaid and salt unknown, to bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing, so send I you to Toa for me alone. Know anything about that? So send I you to bind the bruised and broken, or wandering souls to work and weep and wait, to bear the burden of a world of weary, to suffer for my sake. So send I you to loneliness, I know a little of that, and longing, with heart a-hungering for the loved and known, forsaking home and kindred, friend or dear one, so send I you to know my love alone.

So send I you, young person, to leave your life's ambition, to die to dear dreams and self-will resign, to labor long in love where men revile you, to lose your life in mine. Think you want to tackle that? And the last one, so send I you to hearts made hard by hatred, to eyes made blind because they will not see, to spend though it be blood, to spend and spare not, so send I you to taste of Calvary. I asked Cliff Barrows the other day down in Florida, I said, Cliff, how come this new version and now we don't have John's origin? Well, and I also asked Martha Brandon, who was the soloist at First Church Dallas and who was with me singing there, in the meeting, I said, Martha, how come? The general consensus is that the average church member would find that those verses entirely incomprehensible and would not know what in this world you're asking them to do, much less be willing to tackle it.

But we have some, thank the Lord. One brought me to the airport down in Florida. He's been over in Africa for years and getting ready to go back.

Brought his children over here to educate them. And do you think they want to live in America? This is one thing that made me think so much more. Some kids in this generation know they want to go back to Africa when they get through school.

Now there's kids for you. They've seen both sides of the picture. And I thank the Lord that there are such.

And would God that we had more. I think of a girl in Minneapolis years ago. She's studying to be a nurse and I suppose she's been on the field if she's still living, still over there in that service.

She said the young doctor where she was doing her internship said, do you believe everybody's not saved as you call it to go into hell? And she said, I said to him, Doctor, yes, I believe. Everybody's not a Christian, he's lost, as you say. And he looked down at the floor for a minute and he said, well if you believe that you cannot live like the rest of us live.

As he is, so are we in this world. And the church will get turned upside down when we start out like that again. I was pastor for five years of the oldest Baptist church in the South, getting ready to celebrate its 300th anniversary.

Wesley and Whitfield both went through Charleston in their time. And in those days they created a holy excitement, let me tell you, because those men had paid the price. Clergymen of the Church of England

were all their days.

Wesley didn't start the Methodist movement, he didn't name it, he started it that way. But they paid the price. He wanted to preach in Charleston and the bishop of the church wouldn't let him and go out there and preach somewhere.

So he spoke outdoors and my friend who followed me for 30 years in that church, John Hammond, said that the man's name was Alexander, Bishop Alexander. And all of a sudden he got up in the church and took the text, they that have turned the world upside down are come here also. And he was talking about that kind of preaching coming to town.

But Wesley got up and preached on Alexander the coppersmith has done me much evil. So they got even with each other. Well he took that kind of preaching in those days and I rather admire it myself.

We need more of that. And the church turned the world upside down until Constantine became emperor and became a church member and that nearly ruined us. We never have got over that.

Because everybody wanted to join the church, the emperor belongs, it's quite the thing. It's the end thing. He may have started out to Christianize paganism but he wound up paganizing Christianity.

And we've had a hard time coming out from that. Wrong side up this whole world is. It's got to be turned upside down if it gets right side up isn't it? And they did it back in those days.

The devil's not fighting churches today, he's joining churches. He's going down the aisle every chance he gets to join a church somewhere. And they did it then and it made it respectable in the eyes of this old world.

We better remember that. Church didn't upset the world by hiring a liaison man in Jerusalem. They didn't know a thing about what that was.

They didn't set up a lobby in Rome. But a faithful few on fire did it and could do it again. Now how does your condition down here line up with your situation up there? Well nobody's perfect.

I'm so tired of hearing that. Who said they were? But the standard is not imperfection. You can't be faultless but you can be blameless because the Bible says so.

If a little child writes a letter the best way it could it's not faultless but it's blameless. And you can live a blameless life in the sight of God. Nobody perfect, don't say it.

God helped us to be what we are for as he is so are we. And that's one. I've heard of a duck flying over with some of its companions and it flew over a barn and looked down there and thought that might be a good place to get something to eat.

Came down, stayed. There was plenty of food around there. The others went on and a week became a month and a month became a season and one day was out there feeding and heard a familiar honk way up in the air and looked.

And his erstwhile companions were on the way back. Well he had a momentary impulse to join them and he tried to but he fed too well. He could reach only the eaves of the barn.

Story goes that he said oh well let them go. I'm doing well here. And the day came they say when he never heard them go over.

If you don't watch it my Christian friend you get to fooling around with this world and feeding in the barnyard of this world. I don't know of a better description of it today than that. And you can go to a good old meeting sometime and when the saints are going home and you will temporarily maybe have an impulse to rise up and join them.

Lord put my feet on higher ground. Maybe there'll come a tear to your eyes because you had enough religion and it woke you up again. But no I'm not gonna do it.

I like it kind of out there in the barnyard. And so you stay with it. That old duck made that decision.

And it didn't work for the last time he went swimming. He was in his own grave. Oh I heard that great black preacher preaching for Jerry Falwell a couple centuries ago.

The black man from California preached on the road to the pig pen. It was terrific. He said I never drank liquor but one time in my life a bunch of us boys got some wine, drank it and all of us got sort of dizzy.

And the word got around and I wondered what mom was going to say. She said she didn't say a word for a couple of days. And I thought well now that's strange.

But the day came she said I'm going to town. Why don't you go with me? And I said where are we going mom? She said we're going out here to the slums. That's where you're going to end up anyhow if you keep on the way you started.

She said that's the last drink ever. That may be one way to do it. I don't know.

But if you ever catch a vision of what it is to be as he is and that's what you are. And if you don't watch some of you are going to go out and say well how'd you like the preacher tonight? Oh if I could only get folks where they don't go out saying that whether pro or con. It doesn't make much difference.

But was he telling it strange? If you think I am what are you going to do about it? Do you accept your position with him in this age? And will you live that way? Sandy Cole conference last summer. I had an old boy there that the first couple of days he wanted to follow me around. I didn't know whether I ought to be with him or not.

Weighed every bit of 300 pounds and that made us look like before and after taken. But that wasn't the main thing. That old boy wanted to pray and he wanted to talk about things with God and I'd go to my room and they'd come and knock on the door and say preacher would you mind praying with me? And I began to inquire around there and they asked him to pray in the meeting one night and when he prayed I said he's done that before.

He'd been one of the worst characters you can imagine. You name it and he's done it. His wife had left him, he was living in sin.

And then God saved him a year or two before that. Talk about saved out of the gutter he was. And I got to liking him.

Of course he was a lot of help. We had a time getting in the dining room and it had such a crowd so I learned to put him in front and borrow the red just like the Red Sea opened before Moses. But you know what he had some stationery printed and he wrote me a letter and he had printed at the bottom of every sheet of it as he is so are we in this world.

And I said well bless God if old Mike liked that being what he has been. Now his wife's come back to him. They're both working.

They're on a rescue mission up in Pennsylvania and if anybody ought to know how to run one he does. Oh my friend if we can get enough people to go out of the church saying under their breath and in their hearts as he is so am I right here where I live to live accordingly. That's when revival begins.

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