

# Like Him in This World

by Vance Havner

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life surrendered to Christ, being willing to suffer for His sake, and living for Him alone.*

**Duration:** 36:45

**Scripture:** Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:9-10, John 12:42-43, Hebrews 11:32-40

**Topics:** "Christ Likeness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life of faith and following the examples of the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11. He mentions individuals such as Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets who achieved great things through their faith. The speaker highlights the various accomplishments and victories that can be obtained through faith, such as subduing kingdoms, obtaining promises, and overcoming challenges. However, he also emphasizes that living a life of faith may involve suffering, loneliness, and sacrifice, as well as facing opposition and hatred from others. The speaker encourages the audience to focus on the fundamentals of their faith, such as the authority of the Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ, salvation, the atonement, the Lordship of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. He concludes by reminding the listeners to remember their identity as children of God and to live in a way that reflects their relationship with Him.

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## Transcript

As he is, so are we in this world. Of all the New Testament writers, John states the greatest truths in the simplest terms. He clothes profundity with simplicity.

Now this text is a fair sample. You can't say it in shorter words. As he is, so are we in this world.

And you can't say a greater truth in any words. It's part of a wider passage here, several verses that reach out in all directions. But I want to lift these nine little words out of the context, and I don't think we do any violence, to the other meanings there too, and the other portions.

Nine little words that fall into three sets of three words each. It makes its own outline, you don't have to get up an outline for this. There it is.

As he is, not as he was, mind you, between the eternity of yesterday that never had a beginning, and the eternity of tomorrow that will never have an end, stands Jesus Christ the same. And there's only one thing

that Jesus ever was. I am he that liveth and was dead, but I'm alive forevermore.

He's not dead now. He was dead, but he didn't stay dead. I think when they laid that body away, Pilate and Herod and Caiaphas must have rubbed their hands and said, well, that takes care of him.

But he didn't. He took care of himself. And in what a wonderful way.

They had put a big stone in front of that sepulcher. They had put a seal on it. They had soldiers to guard it.

But neither stones nor seals nor soldiers make any difference when a mighty angel comes down from heaven. And that angel rolled that stone away, and I'm glad the Holy Spirit adds this note, sat on it. And then he crawled up there and sat down and said, now look who's in charge around here.

I like to think that. Look who's in charge. That shows to us that Jesus Christ is the eternal contemporary.

Before Abraham was, I am. John had seen him in the flesh. John had seen him in his resurrection body.

And then he saw him in his glorified body, and that knocked him out. And the glorified Christ said, don't be afraid. I was here before there ever was anything to be afraid of, and I'll be here after everything you're scared of is gone.

So don't be afraid. And John, I'm going to give you a little preview of what's to come. Give you a rundown on all the history ahead that regards God and his people.

And so he did. In the last chapter, you remember, in the last picture, was the new Jerusalem coming down, and poor old John had been sitting there on that rock, patting it, looking at water, water, water everywhere for years and years. Must have been awfully tired.

Water in every direction. He had seen so much sea, he didn't want to see any more sea. All directions.

And this picture said, now in the new Jerusalem, there was no more sea. There is no more sea. I think John said, Lord, that's the best thing you've said yet.

No more sea. I've seen enough of that. All the world's messiahs are dead and buried.

We don't visit the sepulcher of any messiah that's gone. Some say the sepulcher that they point out to us over there is the genuine one. Nobody knows for certain.

But anyway, he's not any. And no mortal can with him compare among the sons of men. Fairer is he than all the fire who fill the heavenly thrones.

The infinitude of Jesus Christ never puts him in a past tense. Never. Any more than you can put God in a past tense.

He forever is. For Abraham was. I am.

As he is. So are we. You mean us here today? That's right.

If we are his, not in degree but in kind. We're not like him in degree to any point of perfection. But if we are partakers of his nature, it doesn't say here, as he is, so should we be.

Doesn't say so may we be. Doesn't say so shall we be. So are we.

Right now. In a Christian, Christ lives again. To me, to live is Christ.

A Christian is both a being and a becoming. We are his in position and our condition, or the match it, in our conduct. I know what you're saying now.

You're saying, yes, but I don't see many folks that bear much resemblance to him. Maybe you've been looking at too many run-of-the-mill church members. And they don't have much evidence sometimes.

And then there are lots that may be saved, but they're babies and they don't grow up like those baby Christians over there in Corinth. And they're always a difficult group. Every church has two nurseries, you know.

Has one for the little babies and another has one for the big ones. Forty years old and over, 150 to 200 and more pounds. That's the big ones.

And they cause real trouble. They've been spoon-fed and had pablum for so long that when a new teacher comes along and preaches it straight, they say, I don't like him, he'd change my formula. Well, he would.

Needs changing sometimes. And they don't grow because they do not follow the rules of growth. Three things make a boy grow.

Food, rest, and exercise. Now, you leave out either one of them, the boy doesn't make any progress. Christians grow by feeding on the Word, resting in the Lord, and exercising themselves under Godliness.

Paul says in Galatians 4, 19, speaks of, My little children of whom I travel in birth again until Christ be formed in you. Now, we are His, and we are mature Christians potentially, but to some extent, if we'd only be what we are. We are in Him.

And as He is, so we are. If we'd just be what we are. I wonder about this sometimes.

Christians are the light of the world and the soul of the earth. But don't you wonder that as many millions of Christians as the church books would indicate, they ought to be lighter than it is that they've got that much light. I know the world is not going to be converted, but it ought to be lighter than the rest of us.

We've got business here. And if the conditions ought to improve to some extent, it seems to me, and if we're the soul of the earth, why is everything so rotten? Conditions ought to be better to some extent, it seems to me. As He is, so are we in this world.

Of all people, in all places, in this world. And not at church alone. It's not very difficult to look past on Sunday morning.

You look so nice. You look like you're ready to flap your wings and fly off to the angelic realms above. But preachers know better than that when they look at you sometimes.

And not as you are in some favored spot, some Shangri-La, far from the maddening crowds' ignoble strife, with some guru handing out platitudes. That's not it at all. But in this old foul, wicked world, this perverted Sodom and Gomorrah, this old rat race, these old salt mines where you work, right there.

Now Jesus lived His life in this world, and He had nowhere to lay His head. I grew up almost in the woods in North Carolina. Some folks think I ought never to have come out.

But I liked solitude, and I still do, and I spend so much time on purpose walking around by myself that maybe I'm not as sociable as I ought to be. But I grew up that way. I said, let me walk in the fields.

He said, no, live in the town. I said, there are no flowers there. No flowers, He said, but a crown.

I said, but the sky is dark, and there's nothing but noise and being. And He wept as He sent me back. There's more, He said, there's sin.

Because there is, I have to be out there in it. I have to be out where the action is. You can't hide away from this thing.

You're not supposed to be that kind of a mystic. The old timers back in the early ages, you know, hid in caverns and holes. It takes more than a hole to make you holier.

You don't become holier by hiding from the world and all the strife. These mystics, a lot of them are just mystics, I think. As He is, so are we right in this old wretched world with all its sin and shame.

We're there, and that we are here. One of my favorite songs, is John Peterson's masterpiece, I think, So Send Thou You. Now, down our way, we've got a new version of that in our book, in our hymnal.

And I'm not criticizing it, it's good. But it doesn't say what this says. And I asked Cliff Barrows the other day, I said, Cliff, how come nothing will ever come up to this? So send thou you to labor unrewarded, to serve unpaid, unsold, unknown, to bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing, so send thou you to toil for me alone.

Now, not everybody's writing like that today, friend. We've got a lot of songs coming out, because we could do without a lot of them. So send thou you to bind the bruised and broken, or wandering souls to work, to weep, to wait, to bear the burden of a world a weary, so send thou you to suffer my sake.

Do you think the average Sunday morning, well fed, well clothed, well housed, comfortable, a bunch of Christians ready for this? So send thou you to loneliness, I know something about that, and longing, with heart a-hungering for the loved and known, forsaking home and kindred, friend or dear one. So send thou you to know my love alone. Well, you know about that.

So send thou you to leave your life's ambitions, to die to dearest dreams, self-will resign, to labor long and love where men revile you. Then it comes to a finish in this. So send thou 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 thou you to taste discovery. I ask Martha Brannon of First Baptist Dallas, who's a wonderful singer, was in the meetings in Virginia Beach, and I said, Martha, how come? And she said, yeah, I know, I've got two of them. And it has been suggested, and I thoroughly agree, that I believe that John Peterson's version is almost absolutely incomprehensible to the average Sunday morning Christian, saying unto the old rugged cross, I'll ever be true, it shame and reproach gladly bear.

While to sing that and not know anything about what it means, some of those dear souls might as well be singing in Arabic. And you have that feeling sometimes. Boy, how many know anything about what I've just been reading here? Well, today the note is, God wants you to succeed.

The big word is success today, and under fundamentalist auspices, too. I'm in favor of success, but George Truett gave the best description of it. Success is finding out the will of God and doing it as best you can.

There's no Hollywood to that. That's as plain as can be. And that puts all the positive thinkers and the success boys in the shade.

That's it. And if you're going to be one of those, it's not going to be rosy. Have you read Hebrews 11 lately? You've got two kinds of folks there in that wonderful chapter.

And we wish we could all be in that first classification. Verse, well, we'll start with 32. After all, that Westminster Abbey of the heroes of faith.

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah and David also and Samuel and the prophet who, now listen, everybody would like to live like this, 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. That's terrific. Wouldn't you like to march over all the mountains like that? Total victory in every detail, but hold everything right in the middle of that verse.

Others, uh-oh, they didn't do so well. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings of bonds and imprisonment.

They were stoned. And that next thing, have you ever tried to imagine what it must be like to be sown asunder? I can't think of any more gruesome turn in the whole book about dying. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy.

They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth. These all, thank God, the first batch and this batch both, thank the Lord, having obtained a good report through faith received. The second crowd did not receive the promise then, but God has provided some better things for us than they without us.

I don't know which roads you may have to travel. I know some Christians who seem like everything and anything, just turns out to be a wonderful success. Never sick, their kids behave themselves and grow up to be fine Christians, everything's wonderful, and thank God for them.

Then I know somebody else just as good. And it hasn't gone that way with them. And this other category will take them in.

But you have to leave that with God and the leading characters of the New Testament, Peter and James and Paul and John the Baptist, who say nothing of my Lord, only one did not die a violent death. And that was old John looking at that water all the time over there on Patmos. Not a very exciting prospect in a way when you come to think of it.

And I think when Paul was getting old, the Lord said, Now you've been a good preacher and I'm going to retire you on an income, let you rent a cottage on the Riviera and write your memoirs. Can't find a thing in the world of that affair. Sitting around waiting to have his head chopped off.

You call that success? Well, he found the will of God and did it. And that's a pretty good definition. Oh, I used to go down to Hampton View Bowls Academy a lot when it was a home for missionaries' children.

And those missionaries would leave those youngsters there in his before air travel and not see them again until they were maybe half grown. Now you talk about a heart twister. That was it.

Nowadays they can all fly over in a couple of hours and their accommodations are better. And I'm not disparaging. Thank God for what comforts the missionaries may have.

They don't all have them yet by any manner of means. You know more about that. There's plenty of missionary interest and concern and volunteers here.

They can tell you, not a picnic over there, but somehow I get concerned about this. Do we have an equivalent in the jet age to the kind of devotion that John Peterson is writing about? We have some. It's pretty rare.

Now, I'm concerned about that. The cross has been taken out of the churches and cushions have been substituted. It suits the Saints a lot better.

A song leader told me some time ago that they were going to have a children's program in the church where he works. The kids were supposed to come down the aisle with onward Christian soldiers marching as to war. And at the last, each one of them took a notion they wanted a little cross apiece.

Each one wanted a cross. Took one of those childish notions. He said, oh no, it's too late now.

We've got to go here in a little bit. Well, a couple of them had got hold of some small crosses. Anyhow, he took them away and hid them behind the door in the Sunday school room.

And those kids came down the aisle singing onward Christian soldiers marching as to war with the cross of Jesus hid behind the door. I don't blame them. I think I'd have done that too.

We've hid it behind the door, friend, in a lot of churches today. You can't find it. Some people don't believe they have a cross at all.

In church, I do. I'm not carrying a crucifix around. But many times I say, Lord, how am I doing this way and now it's a cross.

My relationship to God, my relationship to my neighbor. You need something to remind you of that once in a while. But, Christians, when Paul stood before Agrippa, he said, I wish you could all of you be Christians like I am, except these bonds.

And Clarence McCartney used to ask, what would you have to accept? I'd like you to be a Christian except for my bad temper, if you told the truth now. Except for my grumpiness, my selfishness. What would you have to accept if you wished everybody were a Christian like you are? Accept.

He had something that was honorable with the bonds. And Amy Carmichael, that wonderful woman who wrote such marvelous books and some people have had trouble deciphering a lot of it, but it blessed my soul again and again. One night they had dug a hole out there somewhere and she was taken a little walk, fell in and was injured in such a way that for the 15 remaining years of her life she was in agony practically all the time and nothing ever helped her.

And yet she wrote some of the most wonderful things ever. So that's the other side. Just think of Jesus speaking to some Christian who's kind of proud of himself, got a big position maybe.

Hast thou no scar? No hidden scar on foot or side or hand? I hear thee sung as mighty in the land. I hear thee hail thy bright ascendant star. Hast thou no scar, no wound, no scar? Everybody wants medals today, they don't want scars.

Yet as the master shall the servant be, and pierced are the feet that follow me, but thine alone can he have followed far who has no wound, no scar. Now that'll do to think of. That gets down on the avenue where we live, all of us.

I know that I am getting to be an old man and the tendency is to talk about the good old days that weren't so good and sit in the rocking chair and hand out platitudes, but I can't help getting excited today because we're not excited. If Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, if he wasn't, he was the biggest liar or the biggest lunatic in history. It has to be one or the other.

And if he was God, everybody in here, I don't mean that we ought to get into some kind of a Saint Vitus over it, but you know, the world is, the church today is swinging, you know, from one extreme to another and we freeze or we fry, it looks like. And you don't have to freeze or fry, either way, all the way from rigor mortis to Saint Vitus, we're going to be back and forth. Back and forth.

But I'm bothered about it. I think of those Koreans where the missionary preached and then he said, now you must go home and get your rest, the meeting's over. And they wouldn't leave.

They said, we can't sleep now. You've told us God so loved us that he gave his Son. If we'll trust and love him, we'll live forever.

Who can sleep after hearing that? So we go to sleep listening to it here in America. I'm in meetings, I look out over the crowd and I feel like that poor preacher someone he was so worn out with Doxology, Indication, Number 45, this, that, that, on, that same old thing, you know. Hadn't been changed in 40 years, I guess.

He leaned over and said, Lord, give us something that's not on this order of service. I can appreciate that. Very much.

I just feel like that kid at church that the preacher was through, but he wouldn't quit. And he had looked through the hymn book and that didn't excite him much and he'd drawn all the pictures he could think of. Said, Mama, what's that thing flagged with the little stars in it? She said, Son, that's the service flag for those that have died in the service.

He said, the morning service or the evening service. I felt like him more than once. We're dealing with heavenly electricity, friends.

Everybody ought to get a charge or a shock when they come. One of the two. They ought to go out charged for the Lord or shocked.

A few years ago, you know, the big excitement got around that God was dead. Well, I never did worry too much about that crowd, but the crowd that does bother me is the folks who believe he's not dead, but live as though he were. You need to get a little activity out of that crowd.

Don't you remember that over there in the wilderness, even Joshua said to Moses, now, hey, old dad and me, they're prophesying out here, and maybe you'd better rebuke them. They're not in it. He said, would God? All of God's people were prophets.

Now, that's broad-mindedness. That's the real thing. And you remember that one day the disciples came to Jesus and said, there's a bunch of fellas out here who don't belong to our evangelistic association.

You'd better do something about that. He said, if they're not against us, they're for us. Some folks never have got around to that, some good fundamentals yet.

Haven't got around to that. And then Paul wrote and said to the Philippians, now, they've got some preachers out there trying to make me miserable, and they're preaching the truth, but their motives are awful. But he said, I rejoice that Christ is being preached.

Now, you'd think that went over a little bit. Gratia Machen said that, Paul would rather a man have a sound message with an unsound motive than an unsound message with the soundest of motives. I think that went over.

I like the way, I don't agree with the way some folks are doing it today, but what bothers me is, I'm for them, though, any time with all the ways they do it, I take them to the crowd that that other bunch is not doing at all. And we had better learn that as he is, so are we in this world, and begin acting like it. We've got a new song out.

I haven't got all the strength of that yet. We're eating at the table, but we won't work in the field. Oh, that'll enjoy her, I hope, some of them.

Get up on Sunday and sing all this, you know, I am resolved no longer. Yeah, we're in at the Lord's table, we'll all feed there, but we don't work in the field. We're not laborers together with God, they ought to be.

Either he was of God, or I hate to think of what we'd have to do if he were not. So, in this present world, oh, you say, Jesus went about quietly, and he never infuriated anybody, never offended anybody. What are you talking about? Jesus Christ offended more people than anybody else in history, I think.

He said, I didn't come to bring peace with a sword. He created a crisis, and he created a commotion wherever he went. People either had to take a stand for or against.

Does this offend you, he asked. They were offended in him. He offended the Pharisees.

And this is the crisis, it really says, that light has come into the world. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. He put everybody on the spot when he came.

That's the crisis, and we still have it. Church needs to create a crisis. I was pastor for five years at the oldest Baptist church in the South, getting ready now to celebrate their 300th anniversary.

I was not Pastor Gavshed, of course. But, uh, First Baptist Charleston, 1683. And my successor stayed 30 years and did a wonderful work, and the next one who was there, and I was born while I was pastor.

I went over to the house a few days later on and prayed that he'd be a preacher, and now he's pastor of a church. But, uh, John Henry, who stayed 30 years, was telling me about when Whitefield came there and Wesley came there, through, you know, they'd had everything. And, uh, they wouldn't let Whitefield,

wouldn't let Wesley preach in the church, which was the Church of England then.

Wouldn't let him, said, I'll go somewhere and preach for you, but you can't preach there in the public. And the fellow's name was Bishop Alexander. So, he goes out and stands outdoors and preaches.

He cleansed the temple and went at it with vim and vigor. And the little children had a happy time of it, with waving palm branches and crying, Hosanna! And guess who it was that didn't like it? Wasn't the bums and bootleggers. It was the religious folks.

The scribes and Pharisees who read the Bible went to church, prayed in public. All of them tithers, lived separated lives, tried to win others and went to hell. And I said, these kids are making too much racket here.

He said, if you never read out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, that was perfectly praise. Now, that refreshes my soul. Jesus had a hard time here.

And Paul says we must fill up what's left behind of his suffering. I don't know what that means to my heart's content. Colossians 11, 24.

It's certainly not his suffering for sin. He bore all of that himself. But there has been left to us a residue, and there has been left to us a heritage of suffering in the name of Jesus.

And I wonder how many of us are willing to take our part of it. Paul just wanted to know him and his. Most of us are just interested in me and mine.

I want to know him and the power of his resurrection, fellowship of his suffering, and conformity to his death. Just him and his. We'd be more kindly affectioned if we were with him, were like him in this world.

If the world hates you, you know it hated me before it hated you. And John says more about the world than anybody else in the Bible. And in one verse he says world five times in one verse.

Did you know that? Psalm 15:19. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you're not of the world, but I've chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth ye.

I hope we remember that the next time we sing So Careless Me to the old rugged troves I'll ever be through. So are we. Now what we believe is important, but a man may believe correctly with his head and never have a change of heart.

What we do is important, but a man may do good things and still be an unconverted Pharisee. Creed and conduct both have their place, but we're dealing now with character. And character is not merely what a man believes and does, but what he is.

So are we in this world. A Christian is not the sum title of his theology or of his religious activity, but his character is what he is in the sight of God. Partaker of the divine nature by the new birth.

We're not just nice people, we're new creatures. Old things are passed away, old things become new. We're married to him.

Romans 7:4. 2 Corinthians 11:2. We've been married to him. When a woman marries a man, she takes a new name, and she's the right kind of woman. She won't bring any reproach on that name.

She took him for better or worse, and he may have turned out to be a lot worse than she took him for. But she tries to do the best she can under the circumstances. Oh, it means so much these days for us to discover what it means to be a New Testament Christian.

I am going to my own home church, God willing, Sunday to preach at the invitation of Dr. McKeecher and the pastor. I've been there a number of times. It was organized in 1859 before the Civil War.

There were only 1,400 people living in Greensboro then, and now it's quite a city. One of the old pastors, back in 1871, we were in such ill repute as a group of Christians in that day persecuted. He said, I was pissed while I was preaching and when I walked down the street many a time.

And he said, we started a little Sunday school for children. And Sister Dixon, you told her, Sister Dixon, an elegant woman, but they had no money. The war had swept out everything.

And he said, I used to see her headed for church in the snow, carrying one little child and leading another. And I said, Dear Sister, I hate to see you going through such hardship. Oh, no, she said.

That's what my Savior did, and I'm trying to follow Him. Well, isn't that what it's all about anyhow? I'm going to tell this Sunday to my crowd right in that church that now with its lovely, lovely building and 3,600 members and all kinds of activity and good people in there too, and the general percentage, I suppose, of all kinds. Well, I'm going to say it.

If we compare with Sister Dixon, I wonder, how much would we suffer for His name today? A Christian, just C-H-R-I-S-T, and as you've been told many times, I-N means I am nothing. I wish we had started pronouncing it Christ-ian and Christ-ianity instead of Christian and Christian. That messes up the emphasis.

Get the emphasis where it belongs. I would be like Jesus, not just in position, but in condition too. Yesterday reading over, A. W. Tozer said this, When the fundamentals become incidentals, we're in trouble.

When things that ought to be fundamental have become just incidentals. And that's the trouble in many a church today. We are wearing ourselves out doing incidental things, good things.

Yes, you've got to have all that, but not the main thing. And revival will come when we move back from the incidentals and put the emphasis where it belongs, on the fundamentals. What we believe about the authority of the Bible, about Jesus Christ as Son of God, about salvation, about the atonement, about the Lordship of Christ, about the Holy Spirit.

As He is, so are we in this world. I hope we've asked ourselves more than we have. How much like Him am I in this world? Thank God I'm His in position and a child of God, if you are.

But how well do I recommend Him and walk like Him, for we ought to walk also as He will. Father, speak to our hearts and follow us up with this short little sentence. We thank Thee for the now of it and the eternity of it, for the Savior that we have who is the same yesterday, the day, and forever.

Help us to remember whose we are and where we are and how to do now. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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