

# Become Like Jesus

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[ 0 : 01 ] Let's so bow our heads and pray together. Lord, thy word abideth, and our footsteps guideth. Who its truth believeth, light and joy receiveth.

In Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. So I want to preach from a text which wasn't in our reading today, but in a way sums up what we're talking about today.

It's from Matthew chapter 10, verses 24 and 25, where Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, a student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

It is enough. It is enough, says Jesus, for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant his master. We forget, I think, frequently, that Jesus was a rabbi.

He'd been schooled in a rabbinic school. He'd been taught the word. And the rabbi was always keen in relation to his group of disciples.

[ 1 : 19 ] that those disciples would evidence the change that was taking place through the rabbi's teaching by becoming like the rabbi.

Today our theme is, be like Jesus. And it kind of rolls off the tongue, doesn't it, when you say it. But I wonder what you think when you hear that.

Maybe you feel just totally inadequate. How could I ever be like Jesus? What, am I supposed to grow a beard and get sandals and wander around the countryside, stay cryptic stuff?

Some of you might think, it's an arrogance. How could I ever think that I could ever become like Jesus? And maybe for most of us, the idea just seems unattainable.

Well, I need to tell you that the New Testament isn't that big on unattainable ideas. If Jesus said it, it must lie within the realms of possibility, for all of us who own the name of Jesus Christ, to become like him.

[ 2 : 38 ] And you see the challenge. Immediately you start to read the words of the Ten Commandments. You begin to see that there's something really scary going on here.

You have no idea how much the original hearers of the Sermon on the Mount would have been outraged by the claims that Jesus was making.

You remember, there's a phrase in the old translations of the Bible, Jesus said things like, it is written, but now I say to you. What the original hearers would have heard is, this guy, Jesus, is setting himself up as the new Moses.

And we can't have that. So the kind of teaching that really would have outraged them, and probably if it doesn't outrage us, scares us, because it seems like it might be unattainable for us.

Jesus said this, you have heard that it was said, it was written, do not commit adultery. But I tell you, that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully, has already committed adultery.

[ 3 : 56 ] Committed adultery with her in his heart. I mean, it does amaze you, doesn't it, when you read those verses, that there aren't more men in church with patches over their eyes. Or again, it has been said, anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.

But I tell you, that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery. You've heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him, the other also. Immediately, you can see, that if we're going to be like Jesus, there's going to be, a major change takes place, in most of our hearts.

Is it just, an unattainable idea? Or is this something, that with God's help, could become achievable in us?

Jesus gives these instructions, and about 600 years later, there was a monk called Benedict, Saint Benedict, as he would be called in the Roman Catholic Church today, who created an order of monks, and subsequently nuns, that have lasted through the centuries, and still exists today.

[ 5 : 30 ] You can go to Benedictine monasteries, Roman Catholic, and Church of England, up and down this country. Benedict was a very shrewd person, because he understood two things.

He understood that, if we're ever going to be like Jesus, it's a matter of training. It's not just about trying harder, it's about training harder.

And this is, the rule of Saint Benedict, you'll be glad to know, there's an English translation of it, of course the original was in Latin. And this book goes into great detail, to say how the community of monks, ought to live together.

He understood, that if we're going to train for it, we cannot let, our sinful nature, as Paul would have put it, run away with us.

Somehow there's got to be some guidelines, that will help us, live as God wants us to live. This is very detailed stuff. It even says, who should sleep where, in the monks' monastery.

[ 6 : 37 ] Two things Benedict knew. The first thing was, that it's about training, not trying. And we will only become like Jesus, if we can embrace into our hearts, and into our lives, some spiritual discipline.

What Bishop Robert Barron would call, the taming, of our desire. Without that, we will not even get started.

But secondly, Benedict understood, that we would find this, discipline. We'd find it, never easy, but easier, in the context of community.

community. And thus, the context, of a community of monks. One of the things, that living in community, really does to you, and Enthea and I for a while, lived in community, on a lay community, I wasn't a monk, and mercifully she wasn't a nun.

One of the things you learn is, these things cannot, these places cannot discipline, cannot function without discipline. And secondly, it starts to rub the rough edges, off your own character, as you live, eat, and work together.

[ 8 : 05 ] Excuse me. One of the things, that Benedict said, which sounds really strange, to our ears today is, he said, day by day, remind yourself, that you are going to die.

Why would he say that? Was he just some kind of weird guy, who had a strange death wish? No, he wrote it, because, he thought that, if we begin to think about, our death, we might live our lives, in such a way, that we might attain, the idea of dying well.

A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master, it is enough, for the student, to be like his teacher. Benedict thought, that our primary calling, in Christ, was to become like him.

I want to do, three things, with you, this morning. The first thing, I want to do, is just to note, five characteristics, of Jesus, that I think, you need to think about, if we are to train, to become more like him.

The second thing, I want to do, is tell you, three things, you can do, to start to build, this idea, into your lives. And the third thing, I want to do, is to ask you, to stay, take a step.

[ 9 : 36 ] Paul said, in Galatians 5, if we live, by the spirit, let us walk, with the spirit. I want to ask you, to give an honest, assessment of yourself.

Is your life, in step, with the Holy Spirit? Or are you, out of step, with the Holy Spirit? You might like, to ask yourself, this question, and if you're really brave, and you know somebody, who loves you enough, to tell you the truth, you might ask them, what am I becoming?

A friend, John Ortberg, asked the question, in a rather, more scary way. He says, what are you like, when no one's looking?

Don't shout out. Many of us, I think, find ourselves, drifting through life, wasting time, setting wrong priorities, and constantly, seeking to just, testify, ourselves.

Former Archbishop of York, Stuart Blanche, said mysteriously, that if you want to understand, the Bible, you need to start, in the book of Ecclesiastes.

[ 10 : 54 ] That's a strange thing to say, partly because, most of you, wouldn't even be able, to find it, never mind, read it. Listen, listen, to what the, author of the writer of Ecclesiastes, started out with.

Meaningless, meaningless, he wrote, says the teacher, utterly meaningless, everything, is meaningless. See, unlike those, monks of old, unlike those, disciples of old, unless you have, a clear purpose, in your life, a lot of the way, you experience life, of the way you experience, this world, is going to feel, meaningless.

Utterly, meaningless, says the writer, of Ecclesiastes. There is a need, for us, to have our purpose. The purpose, that Benedict set, for his community, was, we should become, more like Jesus. That's not just, a purpose, it's a huge, challenge for us. But purpose, is good for you. In the Harvard, Business Review, an eminent, epidemiologist, wrote, doctors, have even found out, that people, with purpose, in their lives, are less prone, to disease.

For a Christian, our purpose, is found, in, and through Jesus. Let me remind you, of our text, a student, is not above his teacher, nor a servant, above his master.

[12:26] It is enough, it is enough, for the student, to be like, his teacher. So five things, that you might just like, to think about, if you would like, to start, making these steps, to put yourself, in step, with the spirit, as St. Paul put it.

The first thing is, you've really got to think, about humility. I have been, severely, challenged, about this, in my own life.

It seems, in the church, the more you progress, through the orders, of ministry, priest, archdeacon, bishop, the nearer, you get, to the top, of the pyramid, the more, difficult it is, not to be, constantly aware, of your status.

Not to be, constantly aware, of things, that are really, not good for you. Constantly, measuring yourself, against other people.

Constantly, imagining, that you're doing better, than in fact, you probably are. Let me read you, some verses, of Jesus' attitude, as Paul outlines, in Philippians chapter 2.

[13:50] He says this, your attitude, should be the same, as that of Christ Jesus, who being, in the very nature, God, did not consider, equality with God, something to be grasped, but made himself, nothing, taking the very nature, of a servant, being made, in human likeness.

Son of God, came to earth, and understood, his status, as nothing. Writing in that, same epistle, Paul wrote this, and you won't find this, in any 20th century, psychology manual, believe me.

He said, always think of others, as better than yourself, else. What do you say? Does that mean, I've got to be, some kind of doormat? No, it means you've got to be, like Jesus.

When we're offended, when somebody implies, our status is under threat, when it sounds like, people don't have, the same inflated view, of ourselves, as we have, we need to swallow, and remember, the example, of Jesus, who though, he was the son of God, counted himself, nothing, in coming, to earth.

I've heard, lots of times, occasionally, it flashes up, on social media, that I could go, to an assertiveness class. Do you know what? I will praise God, the day I see somebody, advertising a humility class, and I may even sign up for it.

[15:38] Second thing, you need to think about, is service. In John chapter 13, we read the Lord Jesus, at the last supper, which we celebrated, a little earlier, in our service.

And Jesus, at that, last supper, knows that, the end is nigh for him, on this earth. And unlike, most leaving dues, that we go to, where there are, kind of, sickening eulogies, spoken of the person, who's retiring, probably a third of which, are not even true, Jesus chose, to do something.

He stripped down, to his inner garments, and he took, a bowl of water, and a cloth, and he washed, his disciples feet.

And can you imagine that? Can you imagine, being one of those, dusty disciples, at the end of supper, wondering quite, what Jesus was talking about, and suddenly, he strips down, to his inner garments, and starts to wash your feet.

And then he says, when Peter complains, you shouldn't be doing this, Lord, you know, we should be doing it, for you. When Peter complains, he says, unless you do this, for one another, you don't get it.

[17:08] I'm paraphrasing. We're called, to serve. I love to give, customer feedback, to people who ask for it, because, I think that, most of them, are trying to get at, what do we, what do I think about, the service they provided?

I mean, if you know, I've just been in the States, and I got a thing, from Virgin Atlantic, asking me, what I thought, of their customer service. And I said, it was okay, I give it, six out of ten, seven out of ten, but one thing, you need to teach, your staff is, that service with a smile, feels more like service, than service, with a miserable face.

We're called to serve. And you might not like that. To be honest with you, I would be kind, I mean, I used to have to do this, in our cathedral.

On Monday, Thursday evening, we did this thing, of foot washing. Let me be honest with you, I hated it. Everything about my, hygiene obsession, it offended. Having to go to these, big knobby feet, and wash them. But I have to believe, that was good for me. [18:40] And the more I hated it, maybe, the better it was for me. Because it taught me, taught me, that service is often menial, and undramatic.

It's not for the people, who stand up front, waxing eloquent. It's for all of us. I've told you this before, but it always kind of gets me, when I read it.

This slightly, gin-soaked priest, in the city of London, called Gonville, French Beater. He wrote that, he wished that Christians, would carry a bedpan, around their necks, rather than wear a cross. Because he said, it would remind them, that the call of Jesus, is to service. To menial, undramatic service. Not to wear an ornament, whose meaning, is largely lost, upon us.

Humility, service, third thing, love. In Ephesians chapter 5, and verse 2, we read, this is strange, I mean, Ephesians chapter 5, and verse 1, is a real showstopper.

[19:56] Be imitators of God, says Paul. Therefore, as dearly beloved children, and live a life, of love. What's difficult, about that verse, for us, is that love, in New Testament terms, is something very different, than we immediately think of, when we think of love, in our culture today.

I think too often, we confuse lust, and love. But love, in the New Testament, was not so much, bound up with our feelings, but more bound up, with our will.

That's why Jesus, could say, as an attainable ideal, love your enemies. It didn't mean, you've got to feel great, about them. It means that, you've got to want, the best for them.

Loving people, is part of that, menial, and undramatic, service, that I spoke of. It starts, in the will. Not what you feel.

I mean, you know, I'm your classic, grumpy old man. Right? If I went by my feelings, oh my goodness, I would be, even less pleasant, than I am.

[21:22] Love, is the badge, of the church, wrote David Watson. And it's the badge, that we should be, wearing confidently, as we go, into the world, to serve.

Love one another, said Jesus, as I, have loved you. Humility, service, love, fourthly, patient, endurance. Writing, in, his first epistle, Peter, wrote, these words.

1 Peter chapter 2, verses 20 to 21. How is it, to your credit, if you receive, a beating, for doing wrong, and endure it?

But if you suffer, for doing good, and you endure it, this is commendable, before God. Listen to this. To this you were called, because Christ suffered, for you, leaving you, an example, that you should follow, in his ways.

See, it's one of those verses, isn't it, where you kind of think, thank goodness, Jesus didn't, employ spin doctors. Can you imagine, what a spin doctor, would say, if they heard, Jesus or Peter, writing stuff like this, let me tell it to you again.

[22:48] To this, you were called, because Christ Jesus, suffered for you, leaving you, an example. Spin doctors say, you can't, if you want to, if you want people, to follow you, you better chop that one out, pretty quickly.

No. No, says Peter. We are called, to suffer with Jesus, because Jesus, suffered for us.

And the final thing, I know this was a, major theme of Clive's, during the last, few weeks, that he was with us. This idea, that what we have, if we have it, is something, that needs to be shared. In other words, Jesus had an understanding, of mission. His closing words, according to Matthew 28, were, go into all the world. This is a challenge, for a church, where we sit around, imagining how we might, get people to come.

No, Jesus reverses the dynamic, you know what I like to think, is, that the blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, perfect unity, and perfect diversity.

[23:59] That within the Holy Trinity, Trinity, the energy of the Holy Trinity, is always centrifugal. It is always forcing, energy outwards, whereas in our churches, we're more like a vortex, that just sucks energy in.

With our endless rotas, our endless, I mean, I know they're necessary, and I get it, and I'm on them. But when will we get it, that God calls us, to go into the world?

I don't think you can judge, a human being, by their closing words, on planet Earth. Some people have said, some very rude things, as a matter of fact, George VI, comes to mind.

But when the Son of God, leaves the planet, and says, go into all the world, and make disciples, of all cultures, all nations, surely, we, his followers, should take note of this.

But how can, all this work? Am I just going to try harder, when I get home today? Because by the end of the day, it'll probably have worn off. In our reading that we had, that David read to us, in Galatians 5, Paul tells us, that this work of becoming like Jesus, technically, what we call sanctification, is a work of the Holy Spirit.

[ 25 : 28 ] The Spirit is given to us, as a sort of inner driver. In chapter 5, and verse 13, we read there, that, he makes this, redefinition, of, freedom.

Verse 13, you, my brothers, and sisters, were called to be free, but do not use your freedom, to indulge the sinful nature. If I, wanted to speak something, into our culture today, it would be something, along those lines.

Where, largely, our culture, is brought into this, libertarian idea, that if I want to be free, I must be free, to do whatever I want.

Let me tell you, what Paul says about this, in Galatians chapter 5, he says, if you want to live, in the way, that you want to live, he calls this, the acts of the sinful nature.

Right? They're obvious, he says. Sexual immorality. Well, you've only got to turn on your television, or buy a modern novel, to see that we're obsessed, by all that stuff.

[ 26 : 48 ] Sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery, idolatry, and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, discussions, factions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

And if you're sitting there, thinking, drunkenness, orgies, and the like, sounds quite good, then you need to repent, friend. It's another view of freedom, in chapter 5, verse 13.

There's also, another view of community. The entire law, says, Paul, is summed up in a single command, love your neighbour, as yourself.

If you keep on biting, and devouring each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed, by each other. the work of the devil, is to destroy.

The work of God, in the power of the Spirit, through Jesus Christ, is to rebuild us into something, that God wants us to be.

[ 27 : 55 ] And the thing is, it's your choice. Again, this theme emerges, in Galatians. There are two ways, to go in life.

You can either, live by the Spirit, says Paul, or you can live, by the sinful nature. Live by the Spirit, and retain some control, over your life.

Or, live by the sinful nature, and be out of control. So, where do I start?

Let me say to you, three things, that I would love for you today, in the light of what I've, sought to communicate. One is, it really is important, that you read, and learn, Holy Scripture.

Why do I say that? Well, because Jesus told us, in John 14, the counsel of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father, will send in mind, name, will teach you all things, listen to this, and will remind you, of everything I've said to you.

[ 29 : 03 ] The very word, remind, implies that, what Jesus is saying is, I'm going to call to mind, what you know. If you don't know it, you can't be reminded of it.

That old, collect, in the Church of England, prayer book, remember that? Read, mark, learn, Holy Scripture. Second, recognize, that you will not be able, to become like Jesus, in your own strength, and it will be much harder, to do this, on your own.

Come back to that, in a minute. Let me say it again. Recognize, that you won't do this, in your own strength, and it will be much better, to do this, not on your, sorry, much harder, to do this, on your own.

The third thing is, pray. Paul said, in Ephesians 6, pray in the Spirit, on all occasions. Pray for the desire, and my guess is, that the majority of people, who darken the door of churches, on a Sunday, don't give much thought, to becoming like Jesus.

Don't give much thought, to the process, of sanctification. It's more like, well, I am what I am, you know, get over it. Pray, and the Spirit, on all occasions, for the desire, to be more like Jesus.

[ 30 : 37 ] Ask God, that you may start, to change, from the inside out. Leaning on the wind, as Dr. Tozer, would put it.

Trusting, the Holy Spirit, to change you, from the inside out. And I would suggest, before you prayed, that prayer, you might need to pray, a prayer of repentance, repentance.

Not just saying sorry, but promising God, you will, with his strength, turn your life around. And pray that God, would put the right people, in your life.

You know, one of the things, that's, really difficult is, and I don't know, if any of you, watched Freddie Flintoff's thing, where he took these, lads off a, sink estate, in Preston, who had never thought, about cricket, thought cricket, thought cricket, was a game for snobs.

He took them, and not only, did he make them, into a team, but he took them, to India, to play, in a tour, a cricket tour. And one of the things, that was clearly, an anxiety, for all those boys, who made major strides, in their life, was, when they got back home, they mixed, with the old company, with the old company, and their old habits, would come back.

[ 31 : 53 ] I think it's really important, that I, you, all of us, together, pray that God, will put the right people, in front of us, people who have, spiritual maturity, people who will, maybe, help us, when we end up, with stuff, that we can't get by, in our lives.

See, what I'm, working up to here, is that if you think, about these things, you would be mad, not to join a home group.

This is not just like, a cheap plug, this is heartfelt, from my point of view. And right now, we don't have enough leaders, but, if we have enough people, who want to join, I believe God, will supply the leaders, from within us, to lead a home group, that together, we might help each other, through the study of scripture, through prayer, through being together, to grow into the likeness, of Jesus Christ.

One of the things, I've noticed, about growing older, is that, the older you get, the longer it takes, your eyesight, to readjust, from bright light, sorry, from dark light, into bright light. normally, in most of us, that's kind of, first stage, cataracts. But I think, it's like this, that the longer, you walk in darkness, on this planet, the harder, it's going to be, for you to adjust, to the light.

[ 33 : 32 ] John puts it, very well, in his first epistle, where he says this, if we claim, to have fellowship, with him, Jesus, yet walk in darkness, we lie, and do not live, by the truth.

But if we walk, in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship, with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us, from all sin. I wonder, who's ready today, to take one more step, out of the darkness, towards the light.

I wonder, which one of you, is prepared, to give up, on your secret sins. What do you like, when no one's looking?

Because if you think, no one's looking, you've forgotten one thing, God's looking. And anything you do, that is a secret sin, will harm your relationship, with him.

Could we be like Jesus? Could you be like Jesus? Of course you could. It starts with desire.

[ 34 : 48 ] It starts with the recognition, I can't do this, in my own strength. And it ends up, with you becoming something, that you might never imagine, you could become.

And that is more like Jesus. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, this is tough stuff for us.

Lord, we get that. And we want to pray, that today, you would, disavow us of the idea, that we could do any of this, in our own strength.

And Lord, we pray, again, to use Mr. Toes, this well-worn phrase, that we might lean on the wind, that the Holy Spirit, would uphold us, and change us, from the inside out.

That day by day, in some kind of progression, Lord, we might become, more like Jesus. And so, Father, we thank you for your grace, and we thank you for your truth.

[ 35 : 52 ] And we pray, that your grace, and your truth, would infect our lives, in such a way, that we might be transformed, into the people, you call us to be, in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And the people who agreed, said together, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.