

- Our question today is are we becoming more like Jesus?
- We know from our text today that by adaption and grace, through the mercy of Jesus we are made God's children.
- As a result, the Christian life is one of transformation....a work that will be complete when Jesus returns. Christ is coming and we shall be like him.
- But what about now? Are you the Christian God would have you be?
- A small child in a cartoon series gazed up into the eyes of his father and asked, "Dad, WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?" To this question the father replied, "A Christian is a person who loves and obeys God. He loves his friends and neighbours and even his enemies. He prays often, is kind, gentle, holy, and more interested in going to heaven than in earthly riches. That, son, is a Christian!" The boy looked reflective for a moment, then asked, "Have I ever seen one?"
- The father in the cartoon gave a reasonably good answer to his son, didn't he?
- He emphasized the love of God, and our love for others-even for our enemies and afflictors.
- He also emphasized communication with the Father, seeking first the kingdom of heaven, and displaying the fruit of the Spirit in one's life.
- It was not a bad answer. But imagine the father's shock when the son asked if he had ever actually seen such a person!
- Is it possible, as the cartoon suggests, that we sometimes talk a good talk, but walk a poor walk?
- We might be able to tell others what a Christian is-may even profess to be one-but have we ever shown them?

- If someone were to come up to you and ask for a description of a Christian, would you need to TELL them....or could you SHOW them?
 - So today, I want to focus on three things as we consider our preparation for Christ's return when we shall be like him
 - WHAT WE ARE, 3:1.
 - WHAT WE WILL BE, 3:2.
 - WHAT WE SHOULD DO, 3:3.
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- Firstly, WHAT WE ARE, 3:1.
 - You were created to become like Christ
 - From the very beginning God's plan has been to make you like his Son, Jesus.
 - God announced this intention at creation.
 - It echoes throughout scripture and it comes from his extraordinary love for us.
 - We see it in verse 1. *"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."*
 - Those who have been born of God are now "called children of God."
 - That is the reason we are told to behold or see what great love the Father has bestowed upon us.
 - What we are to sense, see and marvel at is the great love God has given us.
 - Our Father has given us an out-of-this-world love.
 - This is wonderful news. His love for us drove God to bring us back to him.
 - The whole plan of salvation begins with God.

- While we were His enemies, God loved us and sent His Son to die for us (Rom. 5:8)!
- His love is so great that by the new birth experience we are now related to the One who is the Divine Creator of the Universe, and can call him Father.
- We are the children of God! We receive from Christ a new nature, a godly nature, and thus are called children of God. This is awesome.
- We do not expect the world to understand this thrilling relationship, because it does not even understand God.
- This love and resulting relationship is foreign to the world.
- Only a person who knows God through Christ can appreciate what it means to be called a child of God.
- How great, how wonderful, how glorious is this gift!
- Unfortunately, we have become so accustomed to expecting God's love that perhaps we no longer stand in awe before it?
- Maybe we actually take it for granted.
- We even think of it as something God owes us.
- But the wise men and women of old and those today who truly experience it's fullness, stand in awe of it.
- It astounds them. How wonderful if we could reflect upon the love of God for us until it astounds us once again and we stand in awe of it.
- There is no better time to do so than during this Christmas Season. //
- Let's also be clear though. We will never become God.
- That prideful lie is Satan's oldest temptation
- The desire to be a god shows up every time we try to control our circumstances, our future and people around us.

- It's in considering all God does for us that we know we are loved, we are created in God's image. And if there is still any doubt, think of what He did to save us!
- The Bible says that "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).
- We can be confident of God's unfailing love because He has proven it beyond all question on the cross.
- We have been reborn into the family of God and as His children are recipients of our Father's love. This amazing love has made us children of the King!
- We are children of God
- He will come one day and take you to His eternal kingdom.

That brings us to our second point:

II. WHAT WE WILL BE (2).

- The emphasis in verse 2 is on what the children of God will be in the future. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."
- The reference here is, of course, to the time of Christ's coming for His church.
- Having spoken of our present dignity as children of God, John now speaks of our future destiny.
- Our privileged opportunities in this world are understandable and within the reach of all who will lay hold of them by abiding in Christ, but the reluctant glories in the world to come are still veiled.

- The blessings there are connected with the responsibilities here. The fact that God expects future development as is seen in verse one is seen again in verse two where the beloved are addressed as children of God.
- Child implies that future development is to be expected. A child has such potential. We look at them with hope and expectation but do not know how they will turn out.
- The appearance of Christ brings about changes or results in God's children.
- The result of Christ's appearing is that we will be like Him.
- God's ultimate goal for our life on earth is not comfort but character development.
- He wants us to grow up spiritually and become like Christ
- Becoming like Christ doesn't mean losing our personality or becoming a mindless clone
- God created us unique
- Christlikeness is all about transforming our character not our personality
- In her book *God by Moonlight*, Amy Carmichael describes an atlas MOTH EMERGING from its cocoon in the mountain forests west of Dohnavur, India. She writes, *"It hangs from a twig, like a small brown bag . . . and however often we see it we are never prepared for the miracle that emerges . . . It has wings of crimson and pink, and blended green of various soft tones, shading off into terra-cotta, brown, old-gold.*
- *Each wing has a window made of a clear substance like a delicate flake of talc, and on the edge of each is a pattern of wavy lines or dots, or some other dainty device. From wing-tip to wing-tip, nine, sometimes ten, inches of beauty, one of God's lovely wonders-that is what comes out of the brown paper bag."*
- Who would think that such exquisite beauty could come from a drab dull cocoon? But a much greater miracle awaits the child of God!

- For now, we live in the "brown bag" of these earthly bodies, but not forever. One day, perhaps soon, we shall be made perfect and complete.
- Yes, we shall see our Savior face to face, and wonder of wonders, we shall be like Him!
- God's love for us does not stop with the new birth.
- He continues ministering to us and transforming us into His image until the revelation of Jesus Christ causes the full, culminating revelation of who we are in Him.
- Those Christ purchased by His cross will be perfected at His coming.
- Spiritual maturity is neither instant nor automatic
- It is a gradual progressive development that will take the rest of our lives.
- As Paul says *This will continue until we are...mature, just as Christ is.*
- We are a work in progress and won't be completed here on earth
- Several centuries ago, the Emperor of Japan commissioned a Japanese artist to PAINT AN EXOTIC BIRD. Months passed, then years. Finally, the Emperor went to the artist's studio to ask for an explanation. The artist set a blank canvas on the easel and in an hour he completed the painting of a bird that would become a masterpiece. The Emperor asked why there had been such a long delay. The artist then went from cabinet to cabinet; he produced arm loads of drawings of feathers, tendons, wings, feet claws, eyes beaks of birds. These he placed one before the Emperor.
- The Holy Spirit operates in the life of the believer, so that we may be conformed to the image of God's Son (Romans 8:29).
- This is not done in the moment of our new birth.
- That moment is the declaration of His divine purpose for us. It is just the beginning of the long work (Phil. 1:6).

- The whole process is a detailed and painstaking progress "until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).
- Then the day shall come when the Emperor of emperors will come for us, and the completed work will flash forth in a moment.
- "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."///

III. WHAT WE SHOULD DO (3).

- The Apostle does not stop here. He has told us what we are, what we will be and now in 1 John 3:3 he tells us what we should do.
- Verse 3 teaches us that if we hope in our transformation at the return of Christ we should keep on purifying our lives.
- *"And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."*
- Therefore everyone who has this hope purifies,
- Purify is cleanliness of heart, soul and spirit; of thought, word, and action.
- Purifies means that we must totally surrender to God so that by His grace we may separate ourselves from all that defiles.
- Purifies is in the present tense which denotes a continuous process.
- Our goal for purity is to be pure just as Christ is pure.
- We are not to judge our purity or lives by other people, but by Christ, who is the standard or goal toward which we are to move.
- God's desire is that we be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).
- Our hope of seeing the Lord Jesus arouses the determination to be pure like Him.
- How?

- Rick Warren claims, God uses his word, people and circumstances to mould us.
- All three are indispensable for character development
- God's word provides the truth we need to grow
- God's people provide the support we need to grow
- And circumstances provide the environment we need to practice.
- We cannot grow in spiritual maturity on our own. We need people and situations.
- And all this work of transformation is because of the Father's love.
- Because the Father loved us and sent His Son to die for us,
- we are children of God. Because God loves us and lives within us,
- He wants us to live with Him one day.
- We are saved by the grace of God but the provision for our salvation was originated in the love of God. And since we have experienced the love of the Father, we have no desire to live in sin.
- An unbeliever who sins is a creature sinning against his Creator. A Christian who sins is a child sinning against his Father. The unbeliever sins against law; the believer sins against love.

CONCLUSION

- Christ Jesus is everything the children of God should want to be.
- Do you have this hope of being like Jesus?
- Is it a powerful inspiration/motivation in your life?
- When I train for the Kokoda challenge each year, I train with my 4 students. Even when tackling the real Kokoda trek a few years ago I was diligent in training, in preparing

myself. I ran up the back of Emu Mountain with weights strapped to my legs. I knew what I needed to do.

- I asked the question b/c I wanted to be prepared for my trip over that challenging terrain.
- There is a spiritual parallel.
- We too need to prepare beforehand.
- John told us in today's Scripture reading what we can do to prepare for our journey when Christ returns.
- We are to walk with Christ in faith & obedience, keeping our minds pure & our hearts right.
- This will help us become like him.
- Then we will be confident & unashamed when we stand in His presence.
- One day the trumpet will sound and we will ascend. The time to get ready is now. Are you ready?.
- Is hope of being like Christ Jesus a powerful inspiration/ motivation in your life? If it is read his word, meet and interact with his people.
- Who are we? John calls his readers "children of God" (v.2).
- What will we become? We become like Jesus, perfect in God's eyes, free from sin.
- And where are we going? John 14:1-6 tells us that one day He will receive us into our eternal home [body?] He is preparing for us and we shall be like him.