

All Saints, 2010

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Text: 1 John 3:1-3, Matthew 5:1-12

Title: Being like Jesus

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Perhaps you heard this question when you were younger. Perhaps people still ask you this question today. What do you want to be?

Most of us want to have a job or occupation that we enjoy doing, and that is helpful for other people. Kids grow up wanting to be doctors or teachers or firefighters or any number of things. I wanted to be a zoo keeper.

But what you want to be when you grow up is more than just about a job. For many of us it included things like, "I want to be successful." "I want to be comfortable." "I want to own a house and a nice car." "I want to travel and see the world." "I want to get married." "I want to have a family."

Sometimes these dreams come true. Sometime they don't.

No one ever says, "I want to be homeless when I grow up." Or, "I want to be unemployed." "I want barely scrape by." "I want to be poor."

No one ever says, "I want to be lonely." Or, "I want to be divorced." Or, "I want my kids to resent me." "I want my family to move far away so I never see them."

No one says, "I want to be pain." "I want to have Alzheimer's." "I want to live in a nursing home." "I want to be a widow or a widower." Or, "I want to die."

Even though no one says these things, this is how our lives often turn out. We have a glorious picture of our future, but it doesn't usually end up how we plan things. We spend our lives fighting a losing battle against debt, against sin and conflict, against sickness, pain and death.

And we lose that battle time and again.

For many of you, this year has not turned out how you planned and hoped and dreamed it would. None of you planned to have loved ones die this year. None of you looked forward to this day last year, and expected to be here in this place.

And others of you will be in this place next year. Many of you will have people you know and love who will die in the coming year.

So where do we turn when our hopes and dreams fail? Where do we turn when we are in mourning? We turn to God, and we find Him speaking to us in His Word.

In this time of grief, our hope comes from God's word. And we turn to our Epistle lesson from First John.

In First John three, God tells us what we will be like when we grow up, spiritually. God tells us what our future will be like. "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

When you grow up, when you are completely mature in the faith, when the Lord Jesus returns, you will be like him.

Many of us grow up wanting to be like someone else. We want to be like our heroes, whether it's Michael Jordan or another sports star, whether it's Miley Cyrus or another supermodel or actress, or whether it's someone in our family, our mom or dad or grandparents. Often we say, "When I grow up, I want to be like him or her (whomever that is)."

The best of all possible answers is, "When I grow up, I want to be like Jesus."

It sounds silly. It sounds impossible. But God makes this future a reality.

In these verses God promises us that we are His children, and that we will be like Him when we grow up. We grow up to be like our daddy, God the Father, and like our big brother, Jesus.

We are God's children through Holy Baptism. This year five new children of God were added to the family right here in our midst- Zachary, Nathan, Deangelo, Mary and Emily. God made them His children and welcomed them into His family. What an amazing miracle.

Those who passed away this year- Joyce, James, Mary, Butch and Michelle were all God's children, too. They were all baptized and were members of God's family and ours.

As God's children, sometimes we behave and obey like good children. More often than not, we misbehave and disobey. But our Father still forgives us. He loves us, even when we sin. There is hope for us and for our loved ones who have died. We remember them today not because they were perfect children, but because they were forgiven.

And God invites us all to the family dinner table each week to eat and to drink with Him.

It is here at this table that we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Since He lives in us, we are now like Him. This is how God makes us like Himself, as He fills us with His own body and blood.

In the gospel lesson, Jesus tells us what it means to be like Him.

To be like Jesus means to be poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, making peace, and persecuted.

These are all qualities and characteristics of Jesus.

But Jesus makes you to be like Him.

Since you are a child of God, since you are filled with His word and Spirit and body and blood, you too are poor in spirit, you mourn, you are meek, you hunger and thirst for righteousness, you are merciful, you are pure in heart, you are a peacemaker, and you are persecuted, along with all the saints.

And so you receive all these blessings from God. Not because you've earned them or deserve them, but because God has made you to be like Him and like His Son.

Yours in the kingdom of heaven.
You will be comforted.
You will be satisfied.
You will receive mercy.
You will see God.
You will be sons of God.
Yours is the kingdom of heaven.

All yours, because you are in Christ.

Now we're not there yet. And there's much more that we'll have to go through in the days and weeks and months and years ahead. We still struggle with our own sin. We still struggle with the effects of sin in our life- pain, separation and even death.

And even if the future in the next few years looks grim, we know what our life will look like in the end. We know what is in store for all of God's saints. We know, because God tells us in Revelation 7.

You will be before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will shelter you with his presence. You will hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike you, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be your shepherd, and he will guide you to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from your eyes.

That's where we'll be when we grow up. Thanks be to God.