

Meditation 9: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Speaker: Lay Director

Time: Rise Day Day, approx. 10:15 AM

Length: 30 minute maximum

PURPOSE:

- The Christian life is Christ living in us.
 - (Galatians 2:20) I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- This meditation should help clear the mind of the participants of any false images they may have of the Christian life.
- This meditation should be deeply personal and should involve an examination of the speaker's own living of the Christian life.

OUTLINE: Begin your talk here.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Response (All): Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7)

INTRODUCTION

I. Living the Christian Life

A. Live according to God's Word

1. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2: 19-20)
2. "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the

righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (Philippians 3: 8-9)

- B. Be authentic. Be *your* new self in Christ. Don't compare yourself to others, wishing you could be as "saintly" as some hero.
- C. Consciously let Christ live in and through you
(Colossians 3: 12-17) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
(Note: You might refer to the poem "Christ Has No Hands But My Hands" quoted at the beginning of the *Arise* book.)

II. Signs of a Christian Life

- A. Turns away from the old self, turns to God (Metanoia, change of heart)
- B. Loves the Lord and seeks to know him and do his will
(Matt 22:37) Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
- C. Loves his or her neighbor
(Matt 22:39) Love your neighbor as yourself.
- D. Admits sin, repents, receives absolution, and tries again
- E. Forgives as Christ has forgiven us
- F. Has the fruit of the Spirit
(Galatians 5:22-23) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
- G. Serves Christ as a response to the gift of grace
- H. Authentic Christians are "contagious." Others see something in them that they want in their own lives and are drawn to it.

III. Benefits of Living a Christian Life

- A. *Freedom*: Christians choose to live a Christian life. They don't live that way out of obligation, but out of love. It's their loving response to God's love.
- B. *Courage*: The Holy Spirit shows Christians the difference between right and wrong and what is pleasing to God. Life in Christ and the Holy Spirit dwelling within them gives people the confidence to take the tough stands. They do what is right despite the difficulties.
- C. *Authentic Lives*: Christians are not limited by cultural stereotypes. We are not flaky, pious people that "turn off" others. We live authentic lives based on our ideal. We are men and women that live full, mature lives that point to Christ.
- D. *Grounded In Christ*: not "flying by emotions" or using double standards
- E. *Joy*: being sincerely joyful and knowing that there is real meaning in life
- F. *Peace*: Has the peace that passes understanding

III. False Notions

- A. Christians never commit “serious” sin.
1. We are all in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. God uses repentant sinners to do his work.
 - a. Peter denied Christ three times. Because he repented and turned back to Christ, he became the rock on which Christ built the church.
 - b. St. Augustine fathered an illegitimate son. After his metanoia he was a staunch defender of God's grace in the early church (about AD 400). (Luther quotes him frequently.)
 2. It is dangerous to think that some sins are more serious than others. *All* sin is serious. God *cannot* tolerate it.
- B. Holiness is a trait of the past; it's impossible for us today.
1. Many live holy lives, consider:
 - a. Supreme Court Justice Lindquist (a Lutheran)
 - b. Dr. Oswald Hoffman, Lutheran Hour Speaker
- C. Christians are hypocrites. They think they are holy, but they still sin!
1. Of course Christians sin. All people sin.
(Romans 3:23) *All* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
 2. Christ died to save us from our sins. They are covered with his blood.
 3. As we become aware of our sin, we ask for forgiveness and receive absolution.
- D. Christians expect God to supply the impossible. For example, we don't study for tests, and then pray for God to give them the answers. We tell “a little white lie” knowing that God will forgive us if we ask him.
1. We're all growing our faith. We sometimes do take advantage of God's love for us. As we grow closer to God, he will remake us in the image of Christ so that we can behave more maturely and responsibly.
- E. I was born a Lutheran, so I've got it made with God.
1. We are born children of a fallen humanity. Each of us must admit that we are sinners and accept Jesus Christ as our savior. No one can do that for us, not even our parents, our friends, or our pastor.
 2. We are the only ones that can develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and commit our lives to him.
- F. Christians live perfect, trouble-free lives.
1. We are broken creatures in a broken creation. Bad stuff just happens to everyone.
 2. Life may even be tougher for Christians than for non-Christians.
 - Sometimes it's tough not to take the easy way out, even though you know it's wrong. It takes courage to live your ideal.
 - Sometimes the battle is spiritual.
(Eph 6:10-12) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual

forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

3. When times are tough, we turn to Christ and our Christian community.
 - a. Claim Christ and his promises.
 - b. Claim the promises of God the Father and trust them.
 - c. Claim the community of Christ. Ask them to pray for you. Be carried on the “wings of prayer” by the faith of the community.
 - d. Gain strength from the means of grace – worship and communion.

G. When we can't “feel” Christ's presence in our lives, we have *faith* that he is there and that he cares.

1. (Proverbs 3:5) Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.
2. (Isaiah 41:10) So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
3. Keep praying even though it seems like God isn't listening. Ask others to pray for you.
4. Footprints (poem)

CONCLUSION

- Invite everyone to follow you to the chapel for a visit with our Lord.
- The Lay Director alone should pray aloud, basing petitions on the ideas expressed and examples used in this meditation.

Christ

Has no hands but our hands
To do his work today;

He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in his way;

He has no tongue but our tongue
To tell men how he died;

He has no help but our help
To bring men to his side.

A.J. Flint