

What can we say about the Lord Jesus? What can we say about the one who gave His life for ours? What can we say about the incarnation of a selfless God who willingly suffered torture and death so that we—every person on earth—could have the chance for life?



Touchable God

“Greater
love has no
one than
this, that
one lay
down his
life for his
friends.”

(John 15:13)

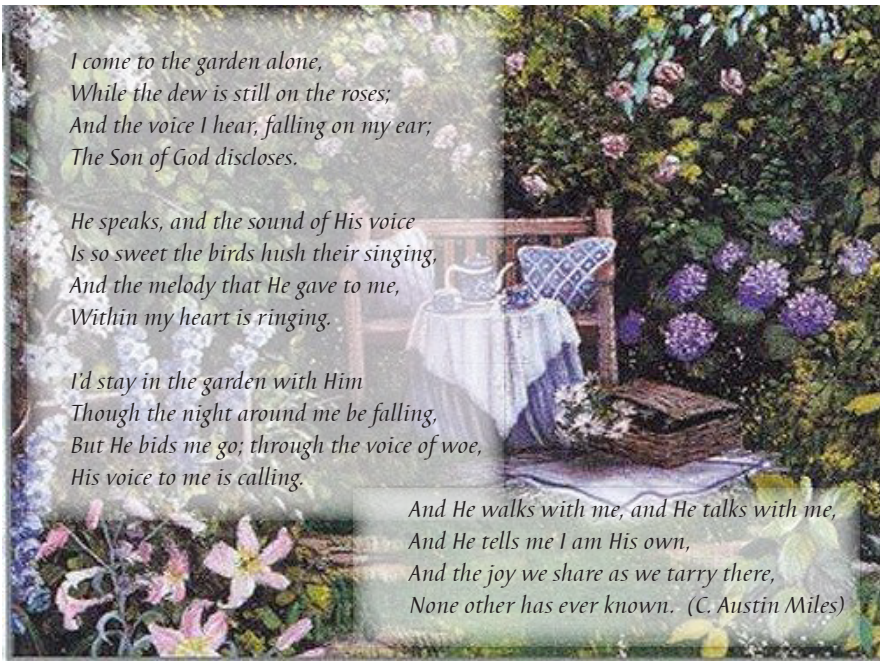
Our friend was a man. Completely and authentically flesh. Jesus of Nazareth was no apparition, no hologram, no product of mass hysteria. He wept real tears, he laughed with true joy. He suffered real pain, and bled real blood. He grew weary and slept, he felt and exhibited anger. He ate and drank, and certainly did what follows as the natural result of eating. Jesus may even have belched after a robust meal, chuckled at a companion’s clever joke, and graciously excused Himself when He experienced an unsociable consequence of spicy food. He was real flesh, born of a woman, raised in the ways of His Jewish brethren.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1:1-3)

But unlike any man before or since, Jesus was also undiluted deity. The Son, who was incarnated as Jesus bar Joseph, is timeless God. He was the active agent in the creation of this earth and all the enveloping universe. He even worked in the affairs of men before He took on their flesh. Jesus, the man, remained at all times complete, utter deity.

A Hands-on Process

There is no lack of historical and theological information about Jesus Christ. And the Bible, with its gospel narratives about Jesus, is open to all. But how are we to really know Him? How do we make contact with this selfless Lord who, though God, came to earth as a man? How do we keep ourselves in close communion with the Lord who is also a brother, an advocate, and whose earthly life is to be a pattern for our own?



*I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.*

*He speaks, and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
And the melody that He gave to me,
Within my heart is ringing.*

*I'd stay in the garden with Him
Though the night around me be falling,
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe,
His voice to me is calling.*

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known. (C. Austin Miles)*

Paul knew. In this eloquent hallelujah, written to the Philippians, he declared that ...I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. (Philippians 3:8,10)

The apostle John, with slightly less eloquence, expressed a similar truth:

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. (1 John 2:3-6)

The Christian journey of sanctification is a hands-on process. It cannot be conducted by long-distance; it cannot be phoned in. It must be experienced. Just as Christ Himself descended from the pristine heights of heaven to soil his feet upon the lowly plane of earth, we must shed any pretense, any guile, any posturing of worldly sophistication. As the British would say, to know Jesus we must "muck in" with Him.

To know Jesus we must live with Him, listen to Him, learn from Him. We must pursue the awkward art of writing His life into ours. Jesus is that most touchable aspect of very God; to know Him, we must touch Him—and let the living Christ touch us.

The Path of Obedience

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience

from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7-10)

Both Paul and John speak of our knowing Christ through the process of obedience: "...being conformed....," and "...keep[ing] His commandments." These are unhappy words to the citizens of a self-absorbed world. We prefer to gain what we wish without inconvenience, without effort. We want it just to happen on its own. Even our modern worship reflects this laziness. Now we repeat one insipid phrase in a "praise chorus" over and over for five minutes, rather than dig deeply into the profound and poetic truths of a hymn. The first can, if we so choose, be performed on autopilot; the second requires more effort on our part.

If we are to walk the path of Jesus, we must enter the path His way, and His way for us is the same as it was for Him: through obedience. If we are serious about truly knowing Jesus, we will have to do more than just observe Him from a distance. We will have to get our feet dirty on the same path He treads; we will have to see the things He sees, through His perspective; we will have to touch and feel and experience the things in His life. Only then will we truly know Jesus as He would have us know Him.

When we pray, asking God to sanctify us, are we prepared to measure up to what that really means? We take the word sanctification much too lightly. Are we prepared to pay the cost of sanctification? The cost will be a deep restriction of all our earthly concerns, and an extensive cultivation of all our godly concerns. Sanctification means to be intensely focused on God's point of view. It means to secure and to keep all the strength of our body, soul, and spirit for God's purpose alone... The reason some of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realized the meaning of sanctification from God's perspective. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the nature that controlled Him will control us. Are we really prepared for what that will cost? It will cost us absolutely everything in us which is not of God.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely... (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Are we prepared to be caught up into the full meaning of Paul's prayer in this verse? Are we prepared to say, "Lord, make me, a sinner saved by grace, as holy as You can"? Jesus prayed that we might be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father (John 17:21-23). The resounding evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is the unmistakable family likeness to Jesus Christ, and the freedom from everything which is not like Him. Are we prepared to set ourselves apart for the Holy Spirit's work in us? (Oswald Chambers)