

The Character of Christ

Scripture References (ESV)

Isaiah 11:1-5 | Matthew 7:21-23

Today's Central Theme

Because Christ delighted in the fear of the Lord and was filled with the Holy Spirit, believers are called not merely to study Jesus, but to imitate His character by pursuing reverence for God, righteous living, spiritual wisdom, and obedient discipleship.

Isaiah 11:1-5

- 1** There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
- 2** And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
- 3** And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
- 4** but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
- 5** Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Following Christ's Example

- 13th-century monk Thomas à Kempis wrote the following words in his seminal work *"Imitation of Christ"*, published in 1427...
 - **"By [the] words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ...whoever wishes to understand fully the words of Christ must try to pattern his whole life on that of Christ."**

Kempis, Thomas à. *The Imitation of Christ* (Dover Thrift Editions: Religion) (p. 1). (Function). Kindle Edition.

- Brother Thomas challenges the reader to go beyond merely wanting to see the works of Christ produced by their hands, and instead to emulate Christ's character through their life. In this challenge, he echoes the very sentiment of Jesus himself captured in Matthew 7:21-23:
21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'
23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'
- *Therefore, we must not just study the work of Jesus, but seek to know the person of Jesus intimately, to understand his character so that, through the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, his character may influence our own. I believe no greater display of that character than the prophetic writings of Isaiah, who not only spoke of what Jesus would do but also gave deep attention to the very character of Christ, which leads us to our text of focus.*

The Promise of Christ

Verse 1: The Branch from Jesse

- At the beginning of verse one, he continues the agricultural analogy that began in the previous chapter. While in that present time, the empires of the world were rising like strong cedar trees, and even though it seems like the people of God were cut down to the very root, and all that was left of them was a stump, Isaiah prophesies that out of that very stump would rise a holy Branch that would bear eternal fruit. That Branch is Jesus! In the following verses, he goes on to give a detailed description of Christ's character, which we should seek to emulate.

The Spirit-Filled Character of Christ

Verse 2: The Spirit Resting Upon Christ

- **“...the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him”**
This denotes the continual presence and counsel of the Holy Spirit. We no longer have to ask the Holy Spirit to come. We just need to yield in our daily lives so we can perpetually acknowledge his presence.
- **“The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”**
Wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge are all byproducts of God's presence in the Spirit. Seeking the Lord's presence through prayer, study, worship, and silence should be a high priority for every believer.

The Character of One Who Fears the Lord

Verse 3: Reverence and Righteous Discernment

- **“And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.”**
To delight in the fear of the Lord means one has such a deep reverence for God that they place him as a priority in every facet of their life.
- **“He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear”**
The Christlike character makes no place for superficial judgment.

Verse 4: Righteous Judgment and Prophetic Authority

- **“but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth”**
Moreover, the one who exhibits Christlike character uses righteousness and equity, and surrenders godly judgment.
- **“and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.”**
There is a prophetic mandate that every Christian must carry / truth to power/ humility to pride / and righteousness to the wicked.

Verse 5: Righteous Judgment and Prophetic Authority

- **“Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”**
The finishing marks of a life that has imitated the character of Christ are righteousness and faithfulness.