



The Imitation of Christ

by Thomas à Kempis *Book Two, Chapter 11*

How Few Are the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus

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Jesus hath now many lovers of his heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of his cross.

He hath many desirous of comfort, but few of tribulation.

He findeth many companions of his table, but few of his abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with him, few are willing to endure anything for him, or with him.

Many follow Jesus unto the breaking of bread; but few to the drinking of the cup of his passion.

Many reverence his miracles, few follow the ignominy of his cross.

Many love Jesus so long as adversities do not happen.

Many praise and bless him, so long as they receive comforts from him.

But if Jesus hide himself, and leave them but a little while, they fall either into complaining, or into too much dejection of mind

2. But they who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus, and not for some special comfort of their own, bless him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the state of highest comfort.

And although he should never be willing to give them comfort, they not withstanding would ever praise him, and wish to be always giving thanks.

3. O, how powerful is the pure love of Jesus, which is mixed with no self-interest, or self-love!

Are not all those to be called mercenary, who are ever seeking comforts?

Do they not show themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own profit and advantage?

Where shall one be found who is willing to serve God for naught?

4. Rarely is anyone found so spiritual as to be stripped of the love of all earthly things.

For where is any man to be found that is indeed poor in spirit, and free from all creatures? "From afar, yea, from the ends of the earth, is his value."

If a man should give all his substance, yet it is nothing.

And if he should practice great repentance, still it is little.

And if he should attain to all knowledge, he is still afar off.

And if he should be of great virtue, and very fervent devotion, yet there is much wanting; especially, one thing, which is most necessary for him.

What is that? That leaving all, he forsake himself, and go wholly from himself, and retain nothing out of self-love?

And when he hath done all that is to be done, so far as he knoweth, let him think that he hath done nothing.

5. Let him not reckon that much, which might be much esteemed; but let him pronounce himself to be in truth an unprofitable servant, as the Truth himself saith, "When you have done all things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants."

Then may he be truly poor and naked in spirit, and say with the prophet, "I am alone and poor."

Yet no man richer than he, no man more powerful, no man more free: for he can leave himself and all things, and set himself in the lowest place.

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