“We Shall Be Like Him” 1 John 3: 1—3

As God’s people gather on All Saints Day, we come from a variety of situations. Some come with gratitude and peace. Others come carrying a fresh wound. For some, the names we read today bring back faces we can still picture clearly, voices we can still hear, conversations we wish we could have one more time. All Saints Day is always a day of remembrance, but for many it is also a day of longing. Into that mixture of grief and hope, the apostle John writes these remarkable words:

“*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.... Beloved, we are God's children now; 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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure*.” (1 John 3:1-3)

There are some passages of Scripture that answer questions. There are others that create wonder. This text does both. John reminds us who we are: God's children now. He reminds us who we will be: when Christ appears, we shall be like him. And then he teaches us something profound about Christian living: what you believe your future to be changes your present. That truth lies at the heart of this passage. What you believe your future to be changes your present.

John is speaking to people who cannot yet see the final chapter. The future remains hidden. "What we will be has not yet appeared." There is mystery here. There are unanswered questions. What exactly will resurrection life be like? What will it mean to have a glorified body? What is heaven like? What are our loved ones experiencing now as they rest in Christ? John doesn't satisfy our curiosity. Instead, he directs our attention to the one thing we can know with certainty: "We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

Did you hear it? "We know." The certainty of that future becomes the foundation for Christian hope in the present. And notice what Christian hope is not. Christian hope is not wishful thinking. When our culture uses the word hope, we often mean uncertainty. We say, "I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow." We say, "I hope my team wins." We say, "I hope everything works out." But biblical hope is confidence in a future God has promised. The Christian says, "Christ is risen. Christ will come again. We shall see him. We shall be like him." That isn't optimism. That is promise. And what you believe your future to be changes your present.

A college student studies differently when graduation is in view. An athlete trains differently when a championship is ahead. As a vacation gets closer and closer, your work mood begins to shift. The future shapes the present.

John says, "We don't know everything about what is coming. But we know enough." We know Christ is coming. We know we will see him. We know we will be transformed. And those certainties begin shaping our lives today.

But on All Saints Day, there is another reason these words are precious. They speak directly into grief. Most of us know that grief changes the way we see life. When someone we love dies, the world feels different. An empty chair suddenly speaks. A birthday arrives. An anniversary comes around. A holiday gathers the family, and someone isn't there. The loss announces itself in hundreds of unexpected ways. All of which is to say that even Christians grieve. In fact, Christians often grieve most deeply because Christ-centered love runs deep.

Sometimes people think faith is supposed to remove sorrow. Scripture never teaches that. Jesus stood at the tomb of Lazarus and wept. The Son of God knew resurrection was coming. He knew death would not have the final word. And still He wept. Christian hope does not cancel grief. It transforms grief. Paul says we do not grieve as those who have no hope. Notice he doesn't say we do not grieve. He says we do not grieve as those who have no hope. There is a difference.

The world sees death as a closed door. Christians see death as a door Christ has passed through first. The world sees only separation. Christians see reunion. The world sees a finished story. Christians know Christ is writing the next chapter. That does not remove the ache. But it does change its character.

Years ago, C. S. Lewis described the haunting, hollow feeling of being in a home stripped of the person he loved. He said, “I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only the rooms would talk to one another and not to me.” Many of us understand exactly what he meant.

Yet John invites us to look beyond that room, beyond that house, beyond even this life. He points us toward a coming day when faith becomes sight. Throughout Scripture, this is the deepest longing of faith. Job says, "With my own eyes I shall see God." The psalmist says, "I shall behold your face in righteousness." John says that one day we will see Christ as He truly is. And seeing Him, we shall be transformed. The future changes the present.

That message is especially important when grief threatens to overwhelm us. Because grief can sometimes narrow our vision. It can persuade us that loss is the defining reality. John gently lifts your eyes higher. Yes, there is loss. Yes, there are tears. Yes, there are empty places that remain painfully empty.

But there is also Jesus. And because there is Jesus, there is resurrection. There is reunion. There is transformation. There is a future secured by the victory of Jesus. The day is coming when faith will become sight. And on that day, we shall see Him as He is. And seeing Him, we shall be like Him.

Let this future change your present; In the name of Jesus. Amen.