

- **Hello everyone! This is Pastor Ethan, and I'm recording this message for Sunday, March 19th, 2023. This is a significant day in the life of Trinity Church, as after 20 years it is my last Sunday as the Pastor of our local congregation and church ministry. If you've tracked with me for some time in this podcast, I ask that you pray for Trinity's local ministry here in the Vail Valley, which I am confident will continue with the vibrancy and purpose only God can bring.**
- **SO, as you may know, I will continue to lead our Beaver Creek Congregation for approximately another year, and during that time I'll continue to post my messages online.**
- **Thank you again for all your prayer and support, and without further ado, let's jump back into Colossians where...**
- **Our scripture today is Colossians 3:17-18...**
Last week we saw Paul shift gears in his letter to the Colossians, as he moved from focusing on what is already true of us INTERNALLY- who we are In Christ- to how this truth- when we are walking by faith, one day at a time – will lead to an...

✠ **The inevitable result**

- **Simply put, this is ongoing transformation of HOW WE LIVE. HOW we think, feel, and act in our relationships with people. As we've said here many times before, this is essential process- as New Creations in Christ- of OUR character and nature coming to reflect and express Christ's character and nature.**
- **Paul sums this up powerfully in...**

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

- **Last Sunday we explored this from the negative perspective, as Paul described the kind of life we have put behind because it is no longer who we are.**
- **TODAY we shift to the positive perspective- what it looks like for us to 'clothe ourselves' with the nature and character of Christ.**
- **NOW- I've never been known as a person who loved to dress up. First job out of school was at a large Architecture firm in Charleston SC, and it had a pretty formal business culture. I remember one day at an all company staff meeting, the head of HR told us we would start observing 'casual Friday'. When asked what that meant, she said "nice jeans, no tie and jacket required... you know, look professional, but just drop it down a notch"... to which someone in the room said –'Oh, you mean we get to dress like Ethan dresses all the time.'..."**
- **BUT, when I DO dress up, it's always fun to hear someone say... WOW! You look... SHARP!**
- **This is the sense Paul gives us as he uses his metaphor of the Christian's new clothes...**

✠ **The new has come, and it looks sharp!**

Colossians 3:12-17 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ 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.

- **WOW! Ok, lets look closer.**
- **Paul's about to describe to these believers what their New Creation life should LOOK LIKE, and as he so often does, he begins by saying...**

† Remember who you are!

Colossians 3:12a Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved

- **Say that with me... "WE ARE..." Now, this is true of you as individual believers, but the emphasis here is on the COMMUNITY of believers. Together, as a loving and forgiving family of faith, we are CHOSEN BY GOD, HOLY AND DEARLY LOVED. THAT is who you are!**
- **To be holy means to be 'set apart' to God and for God. The emphasis here is WHO WE ARE because of what GOD HAS DONE. In other words, we are holy not because of our deservedness, but because of God's Grace. We are dearly loved not because we are always lovable, but because of God's Love.**
- **This is humbling! Even more, it's incredible to note that Paul's words to describe us are also used in the NT to describe JESUS. Just a few examples...**
 - **In John 6:69 Peter confessed to Jesus "We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy one of God!"**
 - **In 1st Peter 2:4 Peter describes Jesus as "Chosen by God and precious to God"**
 - **In Matthew 3:17 (J's baptism) God's voice came from heaven and declared "This is my son, whom I Love!"**
- **THINK OF THIS! Next time your flesh is trying to tell you that you are of little value, remember that the way GOD refers to JESUS- and the way the NT writers described Jesus- this is how God- speaking here through Paul- this is how God describes US.**
- **Over the years we've talked many times about how the NT describes how we are CHILDREN OF GOD- but we are SIBLINGS of Christ! AND SO, as brothers and sisters of Christ, what is TRUE OF CHRIST is now TRUE OF US. Something to think about!**
- **So with that foundation, Paul now describes the...**

† The Christian's new clothes

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

- **Think about this metaphor. In one sense, our clothing is something that protects us, helps keep us warm, healthy, protected.**
- **But here Paul thinks of our clothing as how we present ourselves to the world around us... what 'Christ in us' looks like.**
- **QUESTION... If you were task a typical person in our society today- average resident of our valley- what is the 'clothing' Christian's are perceived as wearing? If you zoom out just a bit, what image does Christian culture today project about who we are, what is most important to us, how we treat people?**

- *It's not always pretty! Andy Stanley once said "there are things about Christian culture that people RESIST- and that we- as disciples of Jesus Christ, should ALSO RESIST, because they are NOT expressive of the character, nature, and goodness of God!*
- *IN CONTRAST, ANY PERSON who expresses the attributes Paul describes here- as who they genuinely are- with EVERYONE they know and meet- that person will be valued and loved.*
- *THIS is the kind of life that not only leads to a deep-seated personal fullness and contentment... is the kind of living that makes God beautiful.*
- *So lets walk through these... the authentic clothes of the disciple of Jesus.*

- **Compassion**

- *A deep sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others.*
- *Related concept is empathy- ability to understand and share the feelings of another- NOW, some people have naturally greater empathy than others. I'm not always quick to pick up on how another person is feeling, and some people are really gifted with empathy.*
- *But compassion is a way the Spirit will work through ALL OF US. We may not all be highly empathetic, but compassion means we CARE ABOUT PEOPLE- ALL people. Compassion means we have a genuine desire to listen and help- it means we see every person as God sees us- as precious, valued- people who are created in God's image just as we are, and whose lives matter.*
- *Inseparable from and almost synonymous with compassion is...*

- **Kindness**

- *Kindness is proactive compassion- the act of being friendly, considerate, generous, and often self-sacrificial. Kindness carries with it the idea of things that are small, simple, but make a powerful difference.*
- *I heard a podcast recently that told the story of multiple Jews who escaped Nazi Germany- with all these survivors, they shared how their salvation wasn't a single heroic act from some benefactor- although that sometimes happened. Rather, their salvation was innumerable small acts of kindness from many people they would never see again.*
- *I'll add- and I raised some eyebrows when I said this almost a year ago- Kindness is kind to everyone. KINDNESS does not make distinctions among people- be it cultural, political, or even moral. Kindness just IS.*
- *A well-known Christian scholar once observed "It is strange, in view of the great emphasis given by Paul to this essential virtue, just how often it is regarded in practice as inessential"... when he said this, he was observing Christian culture.*
- *In the church at times we like to talk about 'moral failing's'... and based upon the sheer emphasis Paul brings throughout his letters, perhaps one of the church's greatest moral failings has been a FAILURE TO BE KIND. KINDNESS IS ALWAYS ESSENTIAL. There is no such thing as a Christian wardrobe that doesn't prominently feature the beauty of kindness.*

- **Humility**

- *If kindness the Christlike attitude toward other people, then HUMILITY is the Christlike attitude towards ourselves. We looked at this multiple times over the advent season, how our greatest calling to humility is seen in Philippians 3, where Paul says... "Let your*

attitude be the same as Jesus... WHO, being in very nature God, didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped, but rather he HUMBLED HIMSELF... by surrendering himself to the cross.

- **Gentleness**

- *...is the result of a humble heart in terms of our approach to people- idea of developing a gentle persona, a gentle countenance*

- **Patience**

- *... on the other hand, is the outworking of humble kindness in how we respond and react to people.*
- *We see ALL of these attributes in multiple places in scripture. Now, Paul takes the next step.. V13..*

¹³ *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

- *Bear with one another... this is an interesting phrase. We initially may equate this to being patient with someone, but the Greek has a broader emphasis. NT Wright interprets this as 'restraining our natural or initial reaction to people who are difficult, odd, or just different from us- it's the practical outworking of humble kindness, where we give people the freedom to be themselves. There's a word for this... its..*

- **Acceptance**

- *I'll just add this... if you've ever said to yourself... "I love that person, but I just can't accept them"... I encourage you to go read the story of Jesus and Zaccheus in Luke 19.*
- *We often tell ourselves in the church that there are people whom we can't accept, befriend, and still remain holy and faithful to God. NOW, every situation is different, life is nuanced and details matter. But broadly speaking our struggle accepting people is a wall we build ourselves- not a wall built by scripture.*
- *Very often, a necessary part of 'bearing with one another', accepting each other, is essential clothing of:*

- **Forgiveness**

- *There are few concepts more central to a Christian and NT worldview- more central to the Gospel and the very nature of God, than FORGIVENESS.*
- *I heard a comedian once say that lies are the oil that lubricates the gears of human interactions- implying that if we were always honest that the relational wheels of society would just come off and we would all hate each other- this actually is a fairly commonly held view.*
- *But rather than dishonesty being the oil of relationships- it is FORGIVENESS AND MERCY that allow us to care for each other even when we regularly fail each other.*
- *If we had any doubt about the strength of Paul's emphasis here, he says 'Forgive as THE LORD forgave you.'" Once again, forgiveness and mercy are essential articles of the Christian's daily wardrobe.*
- *Paul concludes this description with the Christians' most important piece of clothing- the outer garment that covers, sums up, and gives life to all the others...*

- **Love**

¹⁴ *And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

- **Over the years one of the examples you may have grown tired of hearing me say is that of Jesus and the pharisees in Matthew 22:38ff**

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

- **LOVE GOD- and the greatest expression of our love of God is how we LOVE OTHER PEOPLE.**
- **MOVING ON... Paul starts a new thought, a new paragraph, but I’m including verse 15 in the list of our NEW CLOTHES in Christ....**

¹⁵ *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

- **Peace**

- **Often when scripture speaks of our PEACE as believers, it refers to the inner peace and humility that results from our conviction of God’s love and goodness. HERE, HOWEVER, Paul speaks of the peace that will exist AMONG BELIEVERS when we are expressing these attributes of Christ’s nature within our family of faith.**
- **There’s always been lots of discussion within Christian culture about who can appropriately be in AUTHORITY within the church, and often these discussions devolve down to gender. But here, Paul proclaims the authority that should rule within the church- within all of our hearts as a body of faith- is PEACE. AND not just the absence of hostility, but the PEACE OF CHRIST- genuine, self-reinforcing, inviting, forgiving, listening, and sustaining.**
- **Lastly, when we are dressed in the character and nature of Christ, the natural result will be a deep and permeating...**

- **Gratitude**

- **Like many of these attributes we’ve discussed, you will find the idea of Gratitude saturated throughout the scripture. There is no authentic Christian living that doesn’t lead to and express gratitude.**
- **You may know the old saying ‘The canary in the coal mine’- if the canary dies, that means something unhealthy is filling the mine. IF ANY EXPRESSION OF THE CHURCH lacks gratitude, then you can be assured something deeper is spiritually unhealthy. A healthy church will be a thankful church.**
- **OKAY... Paul gives us three more descriptions of a healthy Christian community- and the emphasis here IS ON community. Just going to touch on them, and the first is that we will be people who have...**

- ✠ **Rich discussions!**

Colossians 3:16a Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another

- **The ‘message of Christ’ here describes several things. The gospel stories of the life of Jesus- how in the life of Jesus we see the clearest description of the character and nature of God. The gospel message itself- the hope and freedom of what God has accomplished in and through Jesus. The larger picture of our union with Christ, how Christ is our life.**

- **And so Paul says- TALK ABOUT THESE THINGS! Teach them to each other. Be eager to go to a depth where your spiritual conversations will bring both conviction and encouragement!**
- **THIS IS TOUGH! In the busy-ness of our culture the concept of Christian teaching has almost been completely reduced to listening to a preacher or dedicated teacher- either in person, in books, or through any means of recording. I THINK IF PAUL WERE HERE HE WOULD EXCLAIM TO THE CHURCH- These things are wonderful, but they ARE NOT ENOUGH! You are created by God to be a community, and the essential place of spiritual growth is within the relationships you have in that community!**
- **SO TALK TO EACH OTHER ABOUT YOUR FAITH, your questions, your doubts, hopes, your growth. Let your community of faith be a place of rich teaching and conversation as you grow and mature in your relationship with Jesus and your relationships with each other. THIS IS HARD! I GET IT! Saying YES to spending such time together means we must say NO to something else that currently takes our time!**
- **But if there is a message the church today needs to hear, it is that we must somehow challenge the trend of our faith becoming a spectator sport focused on our favorite teams of Christian teachers and leaders.**
- **BIBLICALLY, there is no such thing as a ‘virtual’ church. There may be virtual Christian culture, but the church is a living, breathing, relational community of people who do life together, learn and grow together, and... NEXT BIG THOUGHT...SING TOGETHER. This is-**

✠ The great gift of musical worship

Colossians 3:16 *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*

- **So much could be said here, but suffice it for now to say that singing in worship has been in the DNA of the church since day one. This gift of music for learning and worshipping goes deep into the church’s OT roots, as to this day we sing from the Psalms.**
- **Paul’s emphasis here is that musical worship is a means by which we mature and grow Spiritually- how we are creatively reminded through worship of the majesty, nature, the goodness God- a core truths of our faith in God.**
- **AS SUCH, the content of our worship music should matter to us greatly. Likewise, in a day when Christian music has become a massive industry, this scripture reminds us how the NT’s vision of musical worship is not performance- it is something we do together, as a communal expression of our love of God.**
- **END WITH THIS There’s a song we used to sing quite a bit here... “Blessed by the name of the Lord”- great song...**
- **Tweaking that refrain just a bit, we can here Paul saying to us... YOU, BELIEVER, IN CHRIST YOU ARE BLESSED! YOU are the BLESSED! So, Blessed....**

✠ Blessed... be the Name!

Colossians 3:17 *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.*

- **To do something in the name of Jesus carries the idea, one, of re-creating the presence of Jesus in our own lives, and also being empowered BY JESUS to do so– through His continuous presence in our lives- the amazing reality that CHRIST’S spirit is in union with OUR SPIRIT... the miracle that CHRIST IS IN YOU, and this is the hope of Glory.**

- ***SO, CHURCH, as we dress ourselves in the New-Creation life of Jesus Christ, our creator, redeemer, and sustainer... from a place of deep genuine-ness in our hearts, may we be people who are...***
- ***Compassionate. Kind. Humble. Gentle. Patient. Accepting. Forgiving. Loving. Peace-loving... and filled with gratitude. THIS is the nature and character of Christ who is our life. May it be said of us***