**Sermon New Clothes 7 31 22 Colossians 3:5-14**



The theme of Colossians 3 is “Developing a Christ-like Character”. Today I want to describe that character as “New Clothes.” God’s transformation for believers means we can shed the clothes of our old nature and put on the virtues (or clothes) that are like Christ’s. It’s an amazing process.

When I thought about this clothing analogy, two illustrations came to mind. The first is a song Judy Garland made famous called “Easter Parade.” The clothes we need to dress up in for Easter included a special hat! Kim Stancato will take us back to those days!

The other illustration was the Emperor’s New Clothes. It’s a story of how a very enterprising lying dressmaker conned a very proud self-absorbed king into purchasing a costly new wardrobe that the dressmaker would make for him. It was all imaginary! Then when the dressmaker said it was finished, he persuaded the king to parade around town in his imaginary clothes – when in fact the king was mostly naked. That illustration we decided not to act out! Two clothing analogies outside the one we will discuss today from Col. 3. **Let us pray.**

**The old clothes of sin and the new clothes of Christ’s character**

We start with the clothes of our old sin natue that God wants us to remove: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lies. These too often are ingrained in us and become our daily attire in our relationships. Jesus died to remove the guilt and shame caused by these sinful actions and attitudes. They are part of our old sin nature which needs to be shed. Many other sinful attitudes can be added to this list: lust, pride, self-justification, gossip, abusive behavior, warring behavior and dehumanization like we see during wartimes, and even the culturally “acceptable” behaviors of status-seeking, adultery, immoral living, neglect of family (when it is the unfortunately by-product of job- promotion,) coveteousness, the materialism that always wants more. The list goes on..,



From God’s perspective these are the old clothes that don’t fit anyone who becomes a God-seeker and then believer in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the Holy Spirit those old clothes of the sin nature can be removed and discarded. Just like our children who constantly outgrow their clothes as they grow up, Christians are to outgrow these characteristics of sin that may have been part of their past.

Transformation into “Living Christ” (the theme of our summer sermon series) begins with this removal process. It can be painful and may require discipline but it is necessary.. It reminds me of my dear husband who in these later years has put on considerable weight around his waist. This spring as we took out his summer khakis to wear, I discovered that he had changed from a size 34 to a 36 waist. But he continually fought to get those 34 pants to buckle – unsuccessfully! We have now given away the clothes that no longer fit!:)

The good news of the gospel is that God has a different wardrobe for Christians. And these traits are not illusory nor imagined. They are very real. Here is a good definition of the Christ-like character of the new clothes- Worthy to write down as notes in your bulletin and take home! “Christ-like character is the overflow of a heart that has been captivated by God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit. “ That’s a good definition, don’t you think?

The graphic is an adorable picture of a child who seems so innocent but those of us who have been parents know such innocence and trust is not the total story of children. They can be very selfish and demanding and outright naughty – on purpose! I think the graphic must have been chosen because children who have been loved and nurtured can have the trust and love of a child that Jesus applauds. So we will accept the graphic even though the image is not totally accurate because the words are right on!!!

“Christ-like character is the overflow of a heart that has been captivated by God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit. “

**Colossians 3:12 Now we get to the description of the new clothes.**

This graphic makes me smile and is in keeping with the flapper days of the Judy Garland era: 

 “So chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, forgiveness, patience. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It’s your best all=purpose garment.”

These are the virtues God wants us to wear by the Spirit.

But here’s the catch and the application, beloved. When we choose to live the new life of Love God has laid out for us, we need to put these clothes on everyday. It is a conscious daily choice. The longer we have walked with God, the more “natural” these virtues will feel and seem appropriate. But unfortunately, we may try to put these new virtues on over the old sinful traits. When we do that, invariably the sinful traits will suddenly make their presence known and everyone will suffer. Therefore, each day as you get out of bed and meet with the Lord, ask Him for the ability to do His will and think and act by the Spirit with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, forgiveness, patience and love. In fact, we are to wear love wherever we go.

Our culture, with its idolization of romantic love and obsession with having a perfectly toned body rather than working hard on getting our character in shape, has missed this Christian lifestyle entirely. Wearing love is very practical. It is a serving other-focused way of living that lifts others up and helps them become all God has created them to be. When we wear love everywhere we go, that is called Incarnation.

So here’s the question: Do people feel like they have been with Jesus when they have been with you and me? Do they experience God’s love nd mercy through us? That’s God’s goal. And often it is expressed in kindness.



A quote from Washington Irving says “a kind heart is a fountain of gladness, making everything in its vicinity freshen into smiles.” Isn’t that lovely? “a kind heart is a fountain of gladness, making everything in its vicinity freshen into smiles.” I think acts of beauty and transformation do that. They completely transform the context in which we live. Sometimes it is through selfless acts of one person.

I read a story about this called The Daffodil Garden. All you garden lovers will love this one!:

In a fairly obscure western mountain town, a local took the writer’s family to a small church. The writer says, “On the far side of the church, I saw a hand lettered sign with an arrow that read, ' Daffodil Garden .' We got out of the car, each took a child's hand, and I followed Carolyn (the local) down the path. Then, as we turned a corner, I looked up and gasped. Before me lay the most glorious sight. (see if you can picture this in your mind.)

It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it over the mountain peak and its surrounding slopes. There were flowers planted in majestic, swirling patterns, great ribbons and swathes of deep orange, creamy white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, and saffron and butter yellow. Each different-colored variety was planted in large groups so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. Five acres of flowers.
'Who did this?' I asked the local.
'Just one woman,' she answered. 'She lives on the property. That's her home.' Carolyn pointed to a well-kept A-frame house, small and modestly sitting in the midst of all that glory. We walked up to the house. On the patio, we saw a poster. 'Answers to the Questions I Know You Are Asking', was the headline. The first answer was a simple one. ' 50,000 bulbs,' it read. The second answer was, 'One at a time, by one woman. Two hands, two feet, and one brain.' The third answer was, 'Began in 1958.'
The writer says, “For me, that moment was a life-changing experience. I thought of this woman whom I had never met, who, more than forty years before, had begun, one bulb at a time, to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountaintop. Planting one bulb at a time, year after year, this unknown woman had forever changed the world in which she lived. One day at a time, she had created something of extraordinary magnificence, beauty, and inspiration.

Through God’s love we can create that kind of beauty in people, in our neighborhood, in our church through nurturing others, through justice, through acts of service, one step, one bulb, one person at a time.

**Love in Community**.

Ad that brings us to the final application I want us to consider.

Despite our rampant individualism in the West, God’s intention is for believers to demonstrate His **love as we serve one another in community.** Gospel character is developing Christ-like community**.**

We wear love as a garment when we welcome visitors, find out their needs and serve them in Jesus’ name, love our neightbors as ourselves, see people come to the Lord, model integrity, kindness, grace, and deal in mercy with friction, misunderstanding and conflict by the power of the Spirit.

One of the highest praises that can be given to a church is that when people are in that community, they are experiencing Jesus and his love and compassion and mercy. That’s our call at Ogden Dunes. I have felt it and rejoiced it ever since I have joined this community! Praise God.

I close with a story about Mother Teresa. Most of you have heard of her work among the poor and dying in Calcutta India. Here is how she demonstrated loving your neighbor in community:

The writer this time is Shane Claiborne, who spent a summer in the slums of Calcutta with Mother Teresa, He said, “People often ask me what Mother Teresa was like. Sometimes it's like they wonder if she glowed in the dark or had a halo. She was short, wrinkled, though precious, maybe even a little ornery—like a beautiful, wise old granny. But there is one thing I will never forget—her feet. Her feet were deformed. Each morning in Mass, I would stare at them. I wondered if she had contracted leprosy. But I wasn't going to ask, of course. "Hey Mother, what's wrong with your feet?"

“One day a sister said to us, "Have you noticed her feet?" We nodded, curious. She said: "Her feet are deformed because we get just enough donated shoes for everyone, and Mother does not want anyone to get stuck with the worst pair, so she digs through and finds them. And years of doing that have deformed her feet." Years of loving her neighbor as herself deformed her feet.

*Shane Claiborne,* [*The Irresistible Revolution*](http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/product?item_no=266301&p=1022189) *(Zondervan, 2006), p.167-168*

**In Summary**:

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, forgiveness and patience. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It’s your basic all-purpose garment. Never be without it,” (Col. 3:12 & 14).

The promise from Romans 5:5 is that the Holy Spirit pours God’s love continuously into our hearts. So God has made sure we are never without it. We just need to follow the Spirit’s promptings about how to express this love every day to whomever God brings into our lives.

**Let us pray.**

**Song of Going Forth:** And They’ll know we are Christians be our love.” – We will walk with each other hand in hand, together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land, we will work with each other, we will work side be side, we guard each one’s dignity and save each one’s pride, we will praise God together for making us all one. And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love. (words and music: Peter Scholtes)

**Pastoral Benediction**

“May the Lord make your love overflow for each other and everyone else. May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.” I Thes. 3:12-13