

“Dressing Up” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Friendship Sunday August 25, 2024

- I. **Colossians 3:12-17** – previously read
- II. **Dressing up either makes us happy or fills us with dread.**
 - a. When we were little, it was always fun to get into a closet or chest with old clothes and dress up like adults.
 - b. Sometimes a wedding, a graduation, a fancy dinner, or even a funeral might have us looking into our closet and wondering what to dress up like.
 - i. I attended a wedding for our Latino friends a week ago Saturday, and I put on a tie for the first time in quite a few years... and it dawned on me that I have ties dating back to the '90's... talk about out of style!
 - ii. Maybe you all have felt that way too – looking over dress shirts and ties, or for you ladies, dresses, shoes and accessories that are now out of style.
 - iii. Perhaps the clothes that used to fit so nicely are now in the back of the closet waiting for a New Year's resolution to lose some weight.
 - c. Others have the same clothes no matter what the occasion.
 - i. I remember my son-in-law had to attend some event that required dressing up, and all he had were t-shirts and jeans.
 - ii. After going to the seminary, he needed to buy a few shirts, ties, dress pants, and shoes.
 - d. Dressing up is different for each of us... for example what we call dressing up in Oregon is cargo shorts and a plaid shirt versus New York or DC where people wear suits and ties all the time.
 - e. However, if we find some nice clothes that look good... it makes us feel good... or confident.
- III. **St. Paul writes about dressing up today.**
 - a. When we came into this world in our birthday suits (with no clothing at all), we were actually clothed..... with sin and brokenness.
 - i. Just before our reading starts today, Paul says that we all began with an “old self” (vs 9) – which implies that all of us were sinful, broken people.
 1. It's not a very popular teaching that we come out of the womb sinful, but that is the curse that Adam and Eve passed along to all of us – a sickness that starts at conception and is both chronic and deadly.
 - ii. Yet, by the grace of God, we were not left to overcome this sickness on our own – because there is no cure.
 1. This is the story of the Good News of our salvation – that even though sin and evil had taken us captive, God sent Jesus to ransom us... to buy us back from its grip and bring us to a new life in Christ.

2. Jesus explains this in our Gospel lesson – that His love is the greatest, because He will lay down His life for us... and He even calls us friends. (John 15:13)
 - a. That is the most important thing of all – that God loved us so much that He would come into this world to die for us and set us free.... To dress us in new clothing... the clothing of righteousness – or being right with God.
- b. Jesus says, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.” (John 15:16)
 - i. You see we don’t go down to the store, shop around for some fancy clothes and pick out what kind of righteousness we will wear.
 1. If it were only that easy to make ourselves right with God.
 2. No, God is the only one who can choose us and clothe us with the very best... and it comes in our baptisms.

IV. **Baptism is the basis for putting on, or dressing up, in the way of Jesus.**

- a. Whether we were baptized as babies or anytime later in life, God chose us in Christ to put on a new self... to put on the white robe of righteousness.
 - i. The robe of righteousness is best described as a great trade off or exchange... as Jesus took all our sin and the sin sickness we could not fix... onto the cross with Him... and then, He hands over to us forgiveness, freedom, and being right with God.
 1. We put on a new self... we are in fact, a new person (not just dressed up like one)... and Jesus wins the battle over sin for us... as the old is gone and the new is born.
 2. Baptism gives us this gift, and it’s just like God Himself signing off on the adoption papers and putting His name on us... clothing us in the very best... dressing us up as His firstborn of the King.
- b. When we have this baptismal grace in our lives, St. Paul describes the transformation that occurs in putting off the old behaviors and ways of living – and putting on, or dressing up, in the new behaviors and ways of living.

V. **This new life in Christ brings us to where we sit today.**

- a. Today is Friendship Sunday – when we gather around God’s Word and the fellowship that He is at the heart of.
- b. God knows that we struggle with the long list of selfish desires and self-centered behaviors (listed before our reading today), but He gives us what we need to live together in unity and love.
- c. He writes, “¹² Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (vss 12-13)
 - i. Compassion is when we see things from someone else’s point of view... kindness is an attitude toward those around us... humility means we look up to others rather than down on them... meekness is

- checking our pride at the door... patience means understanding... and bearing with others means we put up with a lot... finally forgiving is not when we feel like it or on our terms, but whenever it's needed.
- d. So now you have a whole outfit on – as a chosen child of God – you have compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and the ability to bear with each other and forgive.
- i. But if there is one thing that's needed... one thing that binds the whole outfit together and makes it work... is love.
 - ii. Love is a single thread that works its way from Christ and His selfless act of mercy on the cross – all the way to us and through us into the lives of others.
 - iii. Not a selfish love, but an unconditional love that covers a multitude of sins (as 1 Peter 4:8 says).
 1. You see, where true love abounds, offenses are overlooked and frequently forgotten.
- e. As God's chosen people, we are able to be in relationship with one another in the best possible ways – because we understand that no one is perfect but we can forgive and stay connected.
- i. Not only that, but Paul says that peace rules our relationships
 1. It's kind of like saying peace is the umpire or the referee – it tells us what we do – not just getting along, but also that our whole lives are aiming for well-being.
- f. Now, these ideals may seem lofty to you... in fact, you might be thinking to yourself, "Pastor obviously doesn't know (someone in your life who is difficult)."
- i. But maybe that's the very person who needs these blessings more than anyone – and you are just the person to live out Christ for them.
- g. We all have levels of friendship – close friends all the way out to acquaintances or maybe "friends" on Facebook who you barely know.
- i. But the blessings that Jesus has given us through baptism and faith are able to make any relationship stronger... and better.
- h. In Christ, we are stronger... more unified... more at peace... and willing to live with the difficulties that come from being in relationship.
- i. Paul encourages us to give thanks three different times in this reading... as we dress up in the good traits God gives us, as we gather around God's Word and worship, and in whatever we do in life.
- i. Give thanks that God chose us to be His friend.
 - ii. Give thanks that God called us His children in baptism.
 - iii. Give thanks that we are changed, and that we can live out God's will with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, a willingness to put up with a lot from each other, forgiveness... and above all love.
 - iv. And finally, give thanks that God has brought us together as friends.
Amen