

December 26, 2021
First Sunday after Christmas
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Colossians 3:12-17 (Exodus 13:1-3, 11-15; Luke 2:22–40)

YOU HAVE BEEN CLOTHED WITH CHRIST

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the St Paul's letter to the Colossians, the third chapter, which you heard read earlier.

The name Jesus means: *Yahweh saves*. And while God's people of the Old Testament did not know *exactly* who Jesus was – they had the Lord's promise of a coming Savior. The entire Old Testament points to Jesus. When hard hearted Pharaoh refused to let God's people go, Yahweh saved them by sending a plague, killing all the firstborn in Egypt. Yet, on that first Passover night, by shedding the blood of a sacrificial lamb, the firstborn of the Israelites were saved from death into life.

The Passover lamb foreshadows Christ Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, redeeming all mankind from death to life. In remembrance of that bloody night, God claimed all of Israel's firstborn as His own in His Ceremonial Law.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.’” (Exodus 13:1-2)

They were to consecrate and set apart all the first-born males – meaning – the animal or child was to be set apart from everyday use for exclusive dedication to holy or sacred use. By consecrating the firstborn, the Lord is helping the people remember their salvation, their freedom, that He would win for them in the great exodus from Egypt. It was a living reminder in each household that God set His people apart from the other nations and peoples to fear, love, and trust in Him above all things.

In our Gospel text we see Mary and Joseph coming to the temple to fulfill the Law. But the Christian Church does not follow this consecration practice anymore because unto you a Savior is born. He was born for you regardless of your credit score, political affiliation, or what you have done. Christ Jesus is born unto you... putting on human flesh and weakness, taking the form of a servant, fulfilling all the Law and the prophets, to consecrate you... to redeem you from death into life. Your true Passover Lamb left the glory of heaven to clothe Himself with your filthy rags and your sinfulness, to put them to death on the cross, so that you might be clothed with His righteousness. He calls you to be set apart and live as His holy people.

For most of us, this happened in Baptism. Jesus instituted the waters of Holy Baptism as His means to set you apart as His child. He washed away your old filthy rags of sin and clothes you with the righteousness of Christ. Before Baptism, you were unfit to come before the Lord, but because Jesus offered Himself as the perfect *once for all sacrifice* (cf: Hebrews 10:10), in baptismal waters God has purified you of your sin and consecrated you to life, making you His own child.

This is the point that St Paul is trying to make to the Christians living in Colossi in our epistle text. There were false teachers among the Colossians teaching doctrines that put restrictions on the freedoms that Christ won on the cross, while at the same time, allowing them to live lives contrary to God's will. And those same heresies still exist today. There are Christians who wish to live in both worlds: one foot living as the new man and the other serving the old Adam.

But that is not a God pleasing life. Not that your words and deeds count toward your salvation. No. Jesus has already done all the work. In our text Paul says that God has called you, He choose you, He forgives you, and makes you holy and beloved. (cf: Colossians 3:12-13, 15) Your relationship with God has nothing to do with obedience to rules. It is based upon God's grace alone, calling you to forgiveness and a new life in Christ.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, put off the old life and put on the Christian life. In the preceding chapter Paul points the Colossians to their Baptism where Jesus raised them to new life, united them with Him, and forgave them of their sins. (cf: Colossians 2:8–15) He points you to your Baptism where you were washed and made clean by the blood of the Lamb. If your old filthy rags have been washed clean and you were clothed in the righteousness of Christ in Baptism, why would the Christian want to put those filthy rags back on and parade down the street?

Imagine spending the day laboring in the hot sun and working up a smelly sweat, so bad that you are offended by your own body odor. At the end of the day, you would obviously take off the soiled and sweaty clothes and take a bath or shower. After scrubbing the grime and stench away, would you put on those same smelly clothes you just took off before after cleaning up. No. You would put on clean clothes. So, too, it is for the Christian. St Paul writes, in Baptism:

"... you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)

He writes:

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
(Galatians 3:27)

Christ has given you new life and calls you to live a life that is pure and set apart for Him. For the sake of your neighbor, put on your new clothes and serve the Lord. Paul writes:

"... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." (Romans 13:14)

Jesus has already done the work of securing your salvation. Out of love for Him, the Christian responds by living a God pleasing life anchored upon faith in Jesus. In our text, Paul gives you

some examples of how God's chosen ones, those set apart, how to live your life, bearing Christ's own virtues.

Paul says put on **compassion**. One who is compassionate is gracious to all people, regardless of their credit score, political affiliation, or what they may have done. By His grace, Christ Jesus has shown you compassion by putting on flesh, keeping God's Law, dying your death so that you have life in His Name.

Paul says put on **kindness**. Kindness gives to your neighbor in need without compulsion or expecting anything in return – just as Christ willingly gave Himself into death for you even though you don't deserve it.

Paul says put on **humility**. Humility takes on the role of servant... placing yourself below others as humble servants of God, caring for their needs – just as in his humiliation – Christ took the form of a servant and humbled Himself, even to the point of death on the cross.

Paul says put on **meekness**. Meekness lets you confess that you are **saint** and **sinner** among other sinners who betray and sin against you, just as Christ was betrayed into the hands of sinners and put to death for their sinfulness.

Paul says put on **patience**. Patience perseveres under injustice without reacting in retribution, just as Jesus did during His earthly ministry.

Paul says **bear with one another**. Christians bear with one another by faith in Jesus, bearing their griefs and burdens just as Jesus bore your filthy rags and sins in His body. By his wounds you are healed.

Paul says to **forgive each other** as the Lord has forgiven you. To forgive is to release others of their of debts against you, whether past or present, real or imaginary, just as God, in Christ Jesus forgives you.

The bottom line is – the Christian life should bear the fruits of repentance and Christian virtue. Make no mistake. Paul **is not** saying that the Christian faith and life are merely a matter of moral improvement. No. Being dead in your trespasses any improvement on your part can only take place as Christ works in you to conform you to his likeness.

Paul puts it another way to the Galatians:

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

(Conclusion)

The Name Jesus means: **Yahweh saves**. As God incarnate, the Word became flesh, Christ Jesus came for you and gave Himself for you to save you from your sins. In Baptism you were united to Jesus death – and if you died with Him you will also live with Him. (cf: Romans 6:8) You are

chosen, set apart, and loved by God. And in His great love Christ changes your life so that you become more like him.

The Lord's Christ came and dwelt among His people and dwells among you... coming to you in Word and Sacrament. He came to you, bringing you faith and the Holy Spirit at the font. He comes to you creating and strengthening your faith in the preaching of His Word. And He comes to you personally in His body and blood given in the Lord's Supper. You have been consecrated from death to life through the blood of Christ Jesus, the true Passover Lamb.

In Christ Jesus, you are a new creation. The old is gone and the new has come. (cf: 2 Corinthians 5:17)

“... whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:17)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.