

Study Guide for October 15, 2017

Theme: Putting on the clothes of Christ (Colossians 3:12-15)

In the lectionary, this reading often happens around the first Sunday after Christmas. That might seem a bit strange. But the birth of Jesus inaugurates a movement on the part of God to make new the very nature of faithful human beings. In this light, this passage becomes a great testimony in that it speaks, in effect, of “sanctification,” that is to say the new life that the Holy Spirit works in us. This is God’s gift for us, and through us God’s love flows. Paul’s letter speaks to a church who is...in dispute (go figure). But to downplay it as Paul saying, “Y’all play nice now,” would be to miss on how this letter speaks to us today; to our mission, and our call to be disciples with each other and out into the world.

As we continue on the theme of being in Christ and being like Christ, I turned to Paul who uses his metaphor beautifully, in that we cannot be renewed and still wear the old. Jesus said, “You cannot put new wine in old wine skin,” (Luke 5:37). Right dress as we will see is not a matter of individual piety, but a matter of how we relate to one another in Christ. It speaks to last week’s question of “What Would Jesus Do?” but yet flips it around to us by suggesting if Jesus were to wear our clothes, put on our skin, how then might we behave towards others?

Read: Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 5:36-39

Excerpts from Nicky Gumbel’s devotional:

“Because of all that Christ has done for you and made possible, you need to re-clothe your heart and mind. Right action begins with right thinking. If you want to live this resurrection life, made possible by Jesus, Paul writes: ‘Set your hearts on things above... Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things’ (vv.1–2). This is not easy because we are surrounded by ‘earthly things’ and temptations. We have to take radical action. That means killing off everything connected with that way of death and being renewed in the image of its Creator.”

Paul presents a list of old clothes: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive language, and lying to others. Each one of us falls short somewhere on this list.

Exercise 1: Write out each word on a separate piece of paper, and then list all the ways in which you struggle to let go of old practices.

Read: Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 10:25-37

“Put on the new clothes. You are one of God’s chosen people and therefore, you are called to live as such. This means a radical change of your position in the world. You need to be active not passive. Christ lives in every Christian, regardless of background. In Christ there is no racial barrier (‘no Greek or Jew’), no religious barrier (‘circumcised or uncircumcised’), no national barrier

(‘barbarian, Scythian’) and no class barrier (‘slave or free’) but ‘Christ is all, and in all’ (v.11). One word sums up our new set of clothes: ‘love’. Paul writes, ‘And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity’ (v.14). This is the beauty of the Christian community – Christ brings about a radical change in your relationships.”

Paul presents a vivid portrait of what it looks like to live as one clothed entirely in Christ, and to live in a community where Christ is all-in-all. The list includes: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bear with one another, forgive each other and clothe yourselves with love.

Exercise 2: Write out each word on a separate piece of paper, and then list all the ways in which you need or desire to make these actions a part of your new wardrobe.

Read: Colossians 3:15; John 14:27

Jesus is One with God. To be ‘in Christ’ means that we too are united in God, through love and grace. The result of this unity is peace.

Exercise 3: Chose one word from either list and make it your goal for the week to live it out in such a way that it will not only bring honor and glory to God, but it will also bring you peace where you need it in your life.

Slow Read and Meditation: As you read **Psalm 148**, try to notice any words or phrases that jump out at you. Write them down or just re-read. I invite you to make this a daily reading for the week as a way to help you better understand the reason why we worship the way we do.

Prayer: Lord, help me today to live a life of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Help me to forgive as you have forgiven me. May your peace rule in my heart.

Work Cited:

Bartlett, David L. and Barbara Brown Taylor, eds. *Feasting on the Word, Year C, Vol 1*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox) 2009. pp. 158-160.
Gumbel, Nicky. *Bible in One Year 2017; Day 280*. YouVersion Bible App (Life.Church 2016).