



good shepherd  
presbyterian church

## **Being Thankful**

Colossians 3:12-17

Sermon by: Robert Austell

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It's Thanksgiving week. As Megan said in the children's message, it may feel like a challenge to feel thankful right now, but there is indeed so much for which to be thankful! Last Sunday we talked about being "salt and light" in the world. Today's passage will also dig into that a bit to remind us what that looks like in terms of character and behavior. Today we are going to look at a special passage that describes those who follow Jesus Christ as chosen... holy.... beloved. In the process of being reminded who and whose we are, I hope you will also find reasons to pause and say, "Thank you, Lord." We will look at three metaphors or images to help understand who we are in Christ, and how to be salt and light in the world!

### **Get Dressed Like Jesus (vv. 12-14)**

In verse 12, those who belong to Jesus are supposed to look like Jesus. Paul uses "put on" to describe a list of character traits and this is the same word for putting on clothes. We are to put on the character of Christ each day just like we get dressed for the day. Here's the list: "Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." And here's the outcome of dressing ourselves in this way: we will *bear with and forgive* each other, just as Jesus does with us.

Remember Jesus' challenge from last week? We are to be SALT and LIGHT in the world. A Christian isn't the one with the best church attendance record or who has given the most money, but one who daily dresses with the character of Christ, *resulting* in the kind of holy impact God designed us for... showing others the mercy and grace we have experienced from God.

Paul is just getting started though. In verse 14, he adds one more trait we should put on daily, and it is even more important – “beyond all these things” – it is love. He doesn’t say as much about love, only noting that it is the “perfect bond of unity,” but he does say that it is most important.

And then he changes metaphors slightly and keeps building his message.

### **Let Jesus Rule and Reside Inside (vv. 15-16)**

Paul continues describing the character traits of those who are identified in Christ, but he changes the metaphor. He began with a metaphor of getting dressed, daily putting on traits like compassion, kindness, and love. Now he uses two different metaphors: Jesus ruling over us and Jesus living in us.

First, he writes in v. 15, “Let the peace of Christ **RULE** in your hearts... and be thankful.” He says a little bit about the peace – it is our purpose and flows out of the unity that he previously mentioned as a result of love. And he includes thankfulness, our theme for today. Thankfulness is a sign that Jesus is ruling in your hearts... that you belong to God. If I rule my own heart, if my passions and interests are self-serving, I will only be thankful to myself, and that turns to greed. But if I look to God as King of my life, then my gratitude to God will result in a willing service, offered freely. And this will not be the only time thankfulness is mentioned in this passage.

Then Paul offers the metaphor of Jesus living or **DWELLING** within us. Paul speaks in verse 16 of the “word of Christ,” which could be the message about Jesus or the content of Jesus’ teaching, or both. The result of that Word living in us is, again, a rubbing off on those around us as that Word bubbles forth in wise teaching, admonishing, and singing. Note again the word “thankfulness” describing our singing of the Word of Christ.

### **All in the Name (v. 17)**

Finally, in verse 17, Paul gathers up all that has gone before – our identity and the character of Christ – and issues a blanket challenge: “Whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

“In the name of Jesus” is a way of pulling together all the powerful metaphors Paul has already used. He has challenged us to dress ourselves daily in the

character of Christ. He has challenged us to let Christ rule our hearts. He has challenged us to have the Word of Christ take residence in our lives. "In the name of" is simply describing a life given fully to Jesus Christ. It means claiming the identity that God has already declared. It means saying 'yes' to belonging to God. It means that "Christian" (which is taking on the name of Christ) is not just about *what you say*, or even the more important *what you do*, but about *who you are*.

What Paul is saying here is that if you belong to God, then belong to God. Take on the family name, but not just externally or for show, but as the very essence of who you are.

And then, interestingly, in that summary sentence, we are reminded one last time to give thanks. "Whatever you do... BE and BELONG to Jesus... and give thanks to God." Something to ponder deeply this Thanksgiving week...

Something to ponder deeply any time...

Who are you? Who does God say you are? What does that mean? Are you thankful about it?

I think the thankfulness comes when we realize whose we are and what that means, because that's truly amazing when you really grab hold of it and God grabs hold of you. Amen.