**Clothe Yourself**

**First Baptist Church, Albemarle**

**June 25, 2017**

 I love new clothes. I grew up working in my parent’s clothing store in Sanford so I was around new clothes growing up. Now, mind you, most of the clothes that were in the store were not my style but I liked all of the new clothes nonetheless. However, the problem with growing up in the clothing business is that you learn about the manufacturing cost, wholesale cost and the retail price. Usually, when a new item came into the store, it immediately went on “sale.” If a shirt cost $10 wholesale, we would mark the regular price as $40 and then immediately put it on sale for $30. Of course, the customers were happy to receive a 25% discount and my dad was happy to make 200% profit from the shirt. This is the game every retail store plays. This is why I don’t like shopping…I just can’t allow myself to buy clothes even close to the retail price!

Seems like Paul also had an affinity for new clothes! Earlier in Colossians, Paul refers to taking off some of our “old clothes” and throwing them in the trash: apparel of anger, lust and lying, the ugly garb of malice, greed and immorality. We used to wear those clothes before we became people in whom Christ dwells and delights. They were our natural wardrobe. Without Christ living in us, enlivening us, making us new, we were spiritually dead, alone and scared. We put on anger in order to manage others; we put on lust in order to feel intimacy; we put on deception in order to get what we wanted. Even though they were filthy rags, they were all we had.

But now we are Christ-inhabited. We live in the strong and unshakeable kingdom of God. We know who we are and whose we are. We know where we live now, and where we will dwell forever. The old clothes simply must go. We don’t need anger, lust and lying; we have no need for rage, slander and greed. We need to strip off the filthy clothes and put on new clothes.

Clothes can change the way you feel. When you put on a new shirt, you feel “new.” When you put on new pants, you tend to walk a little taller. When you run the first mile in a pair of new running shoes, you tend to run a little faster. The “newness” changes the way you feel! So we should strip off our old filthy rags and put on the new clothes that Paul mentioned in our text.

Followers of Jesus put on compassion. Compassion entails a sympathetic and empathetic understanding of the condition of another. The opposite of compassion is judgment. When we lack compassion, we often judge the actions of others. When we see a young mother struggling to control her two screaming kids in the grocery store, we sometimes judge the competency of that mother. Why can’t she control her kids? She must not know how to parent? Yet, if we stopped long enough to have compassion, we might realize that she is a single mother trying to make ends meet. Maybe she is making the best of her situation because her husband is sick with cancer and doesn’t have the strength to help her shop for groceries or care for the children while she tries to take care of everyone in her family. Too often we are quick to judge and too slow to show compassion for people. So as Christians, we are to put on compassion.

Christians should put on kindness. There is so little of it in the world today but we should not give up in showing kindness to others. We should open doors for other people. We should smile at strangers and say a kind word of greeting. We should be generous to people. We should offer to help when someone is carrying a heavy load, physically or emotionally. We should do these things because these (and many others) are acts of kindness that show the love of Jesus to others.

We put on the clothes of humility. Humility is not the same as having a bad, or low, opinion of ourselves. Rather, humility is thinking rightly about ourselves, and the truth about me is that by myself, I am weak and sinful. I have nothing to boast about. If I have done anything worthy, it is because of what God has done through me. Paul wrote in Galatians 6:14, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.” We, like Paul, do not have anything to boast about because anything worthy of boasting about is the work of God in us and through us.

Next, Christians should put on gentleness. One can only be gentle if one is strong; the weak cannot be gentle. I am strong because I live in the kingdom of God and because I am someone in whom Christ dwells and delights. When we are strong in our true identity, it is easy to be gentle because I don’t have to prove my strength. I don’t have to be aggressive to show people how much power I yield. I can be gentle because the power I have is the power of Christ and that is more than sufficient for this world.

Apprentices of Jesus should put on patience. When we forget that we are children God in whom Christ dwells and that we live in God’s unshakeable kingdom, we struggle with impatience. We want things when we want them. We want them done in our own time. We don’t want to wait. Yet, when we remember who we are and who is really in control, then we tend to be more patient and simply let things be as they are. We are more willing to look for God’s direction and guidance when we are not in a hurry, so we put on patience.

Christians also put on forgiveness. In verse 13, Paul exhorts his readers to bear with each other. This is more than just putting up with one another. Bearing one another has a sense of long-suffering or being committed to one another. As the Body of Christ, we are to bear each other because we are committed to one another, just as Christ is committed to us. We forgive whatever grievances we have with one another because in the grand scheme of eternity, it matters not. We forgive because the Lord has forgiven us through Christ.

Finally, over all of these things, we put on love, which binds them together in perfect unity. Consider love as the outer garment keeping in place all of the virtues we put on. Notice that love is not optional. It is not an accessory in our outfit. It is the very thing that holds everything in place. It is the bond that holds everything together!

When we strip off the old filthy rags of anger, lust, lying, malice, greed and immorality and put on the new clothes of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love, then we naturally praise God with gratitude in our hearts. This is how we are to clothe ourselves in Christ.