

PENTECOST 11 SUNDAY JULY 31st, 2016

God's fashion Advice

Scripture: Colossians 3: 1-17

Rev. Peggy Jensen

Prayer: Loving God, you care about our spiritual wholeness, now help us to understand what we need to change. Show us what spiritual gifts we can wear regularly. Inspire us to become one community who recognizes Christ within us and among us. Open our minds and hearts so that we can hear your word for us now. Amen.

Do you really think God cares about what you wear to church? Do you spend time wondering what to wear? Do you notice what others are wearing? Do you remember when there used to be a “dress-code for church?” Men regularly wore suits and ties, and women hats and gloves. All of you look just wonderful the way you are today. The more important thing on Sunday morning, is that you are here to worship.

God does care about our spiritual well-being. There are some old destructive attitudes that we need to let go of to become spiritually healthy. What attitudes do you need to change? Scripture says strip yourself of the old ways and clothe yourself with new ways.

I need a volunteer to carry anger, evil, greed, ... a volunteer. (The volunteer comes forward and puts on a coat with anger, swearing, lies, evil desire, greed, slander/ bullying, and these are all striped away. On Sunday Don Butt volunteered and he model these vices well, thanks Don)

Greed appeared in Luke's reading. Greed is not simply a craving for money, material things, and honour; it is the inordinate desire for precisely those things culture determines status and privilege. Greed, idolatry, deceives one into overvaluing finite goods, this house, this car, this promotion can satisfy the souls' deepest longing.

Truth telling can be very difficult, especially if it means being open to painful truths about ourselves or about matters that really cost us something. What does it mean to be honest about living conditions in Third World nations, many of which are causally related to our comfortable affluence? Do we really want to know the truth about global warming? Are we honest and committed to changing our lives to protect the environment?

When we strip away all those negative, ancient ways what are we to put on instead?

What does the new wardrobe look like?

Scripture now says: “ *As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience,(peace, forgiveness and love.)*

If anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other, just as the Lord has forgiven you, you must forgive.

Above all clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” . Colossians 3: 12-15

This community will put on Compassion- Kindness- Humility- Meekness-Patience - forgiveness, and love. (In the pews there were articles of clothing with these labels, people put them on)

The reading from the letter to the Colossians also has instructions for this community of faith. Here is an invitation to come together as one body for worship. As we continue to explore what it means to be a shared ministry, let's look carefully at these instructions for us today. We are worshipping together every Sunday and it feels good. Together we need to work with this change to create a meaningful worship experience for everyone. Be aware of the positive changes and how this is enriching our worship time together.

“ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, ...and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.” Colossians 3: 15,16

David Gray (Feasting on the Word : Year C Vol. 3 p. 308) offers this pastoral perspective: The letter was originally written to help keep members of the early church loyal to the gospel of Jesus Christ. There was strong pastoral concern about the unity of the church. Many early Christians found it harder to see their spiritual connections than to see their differences. Do you look for the spiritual connections or do you only think about the differences? The early church faced differences between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, etc.

We face divisions today along ethnic, social, racial, gender, sexual-orientation, economic, political, military, familial, and geographic lines, and denomination differences. Fortunately for us, the God who hides is still the God who guides us to the Christ inside us. **“Christ is all and in all”**: That is a broad statement the Pauline writer makes. It makes all the difference. If Christ is in all of us, then we are all guided at some level, by the same Spirit, larger than us. If Christ is in all of us, then our older way of relating can be superseded by our new way of trusting. If Christ is in all of us then we are all searching for God's revealed direction together.

We need to recognize the commonality of all believers. All who have experienced the grace of God have the Holy Spirit guiding them. We may not know exactly what the future looks like but we know who holds the future. Our faith in Christ unites us as a community of faith! Christ is in the hearts of the people in our church pews. The way we speak and act with each other is guided by the Holy Spirit. We clothe ourselves with compassion, humility, and kindness. We offer forgiveness and show patience. We are surrounded by the love of God and we are empowered to respect and love one another. Our actions flow from our gratitude for God's gift of Jesus Christ.

“ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called as one body, and be thankful.”

Our faith in Christ unites us as a community of faith! May it be so. Amen