



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for May 29, 2022
“Home Construction: Love Lived Out”
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

Wedding Crashers

One of my favorite scenes from the movie, *Wedding Crashers* is where Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson are placing a wager on what scripture will be read at the wedding they are attending. Vaughn puts his money on I Corinthians 13, while Wilson offers double or nothing on Colossians 3:12. I had to laugh because it often comes down to those two passages when it comes to scripture being read at weddings.

As we said last week, I Corinthians 13 is not often chosen because couples have the idea that its always read and they don't want to do what everyone else has done. Because of that I Corinthians 13 is not read much at all. Colossians 3, on the other hand, is read all the time. Wilson ended up winning the bet. I could have told him that.

Speaks to Any Relationship

Put in context, Colossians 3:12-17 is written to the church. It is a wonderful passage about how the church is to conduct itself. It offers great insight into how those who are a part of the church are to relate to one another. I think it speaks to any relationship, particularly to those in family. Colossians 3:12-17 not only defines love but encourages those who read to put love into action. Let's then read this wonderful passage.

Colossians 3:12-17

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Clothe Yourself

Every morning, among many things, we choose what we are going to wear for the day. We consider what we'll be doing, whether we'll be inside or outside, whether we need to dress up or dress down. You certainly wouldn't want to wear a pair of shorts in the dead of winter, although we have at least one young person around here who wears shorts pretty much all year long.

The couple on the screen is formally dressed. They're undoubtedly ready to attend an event where such attire is assumed, if not required. You certainly wouldn't want to show up in a pair of jeans and a pullover.

Our Relationship Wardrobe

The important thing here is that we all have a choice about what we will wear. Everybody has their own style. What we wear makes a statement about ourselves. We are able to express ourselves. Our individuality comes shining through.

In Colossians 3:12ff., Paul uses an interesting image in helping us understand how we might best relate to one another. He uses the image of putting on clothes. Paul uses the analogy of getting dressed. In effect, he is saying that there are certain things that need to be a part of our *"relationship wardrobe."*

As we have already said, every morning we choose what we will wear for the day. There's some intentionality with that. Paul encourages us to have the same intentionality when it comes to *"putting on"* those traits that make for strong relationships.

In Colossians 3:12ff., Paul makes another one of his lists.

Last week, as we studied the first eight verses of I Corinthians 13 and found Paul listing some fifteen characteristics of what love is and what it isn't. His effort was to offer a comprehensive definition of love. In Colossians 3, his interest was to get *"the rubber hitting the road."* His every desire was to encourage the people who were a part of the church in Colossae to live out their love for one another in very tangible and practical ways.

As I said earlier, I have always viewed that what Paul writes here is apropos not only for the church, but for every relationship, and particularly for those we have in family.

A List of What to Put On

The list Paul offers of the things to *"put on"* is a strong one. He lists:

- **Compassion.** It is a wonderful thing to stand with another person. No one should feel as though they are an island unto themselves, particularly in family. *"We in this together"* is a right disposition for every family.
- **Kindness.** You remember a few years back when we talked a lot about doing *"random acts of kindness."* Those *"acts"* are not without affect. Nothing signals love and support like an act of kindness. The sky is the limit when it comes to such things.
- **Humility.** Paul puts it well in Philippians 2:3, *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."* We would do well to remember that when it comes to family. None of us are the center of the universe.
- **Gentleness.** A gentle spirit breeds peace. It provides a safe place where everyone can grow and prosper. It promotes an environment where those involved aren't waiting for the next storm to brew.

- **Patience.** Being patience seeks to bear with another even when everything else screams to do otherwise. In family, patience can wear thin. *“I can’t take it any longer”* is an oft-repeated phrase. If anything, we are in it for the long haul when it comes to family. We’d do well to stay patient and enjoy the journey.
- **Forgiveness.** Paul seems to linger here. He knows that forgiveness is critical to relationships that thrive. He calls on us to bear with one another and to offer forgiveness whenever we have a grievance against somebody. We are to forgive as we have been forgiven, which brings to heart and mind the grand forgiveness we have in our Lord and **Savior** Jesus Christ.

And above All Things, Put on Love

“And above things,” Paul writes, *“put on love.”* He sees love as the very thing that *“binds everything together in perfect harmony.”*

When it comes to love Cheryl and I have viewed it as our highest calling. Through it all, it has been the very thing that has *“bound”* us together. Love has been the very thing upon which our home has been built. Regarding the boys, we always wanted to do everything in our power to make sure that both Brian and John knew that there were at least two people in the world who loved them deeply. Win or lose, whatever the grade, rough seas, or calm, I pray the boys always knew we loved them. I also pray their kids know the same.

I will often ask Owen, *“You know who loves you, don’t you?”* And he will always respond, *“Gigi.”* Oh well, I love him anyway.

Our faith calls us to *“love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.”* It calls us to *“love our neighbors as we love ourselves.”* That starts at home and branches out from there. I have said often, *“If I can’t be a Christian at home then I have no business being a Christian anywhere else.”*

Wearing Masks

You and I will have to admit we are more ourselves at home than anywhere—for better and for worse. When it comes to family, *“What you see is what you get.”*

During Covid the masks we wore covered at least half our faces. Sometimes it was hard to recognize who we were with. Masks have a way of covering up who we are, and I’m not talking an N95’s.

At home, we are not so much into wearing masks. We’re more ourselves—for good and for bad. That’s all the more reason to heed Paul’s call to *“put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”*

Things Can Get Awfully Parched

You and I both know that when it comes to family things can get awfully parched. At times marriage can seem like nothing more than a business partnership. For some, it is a matter of one battle after another.

Expectations placed upon our kids can be enormous. Expecting more than they can deliver can leave them exasperated. When you layer in the pressures and dysfunction of extended family, it’s sometimes more than we can take.

Divided Allegiances

Divided allegiances also take their toll. We are pulled in so many ways. It's sometimes hard to keep our sights set on family. Fathers stay way too busy, supposedly for the sake of the family. *"I'm doing all of this for you"* is voiced more than it should be.

Mothers involve themselves in one activity after another, again for the sake of the family. In the end, moms can become so busy they don't have time for those they're trying to support in the first place.

Kids place their focus on other things. While theirs is a time to explore and enjoy, there's no excuse for refusing to participate in family.

Despite a call by God to do otherwise, we are drawn away from home rather than to it. All these things, make it all the more important to be intentional about putting on the things Paul talks about.

Building a Godly Home

What then does it take to build a Godly home?

- How about *"clothing yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience?"*
- How about *"bearing with others and forgiving whatever grievances you may have against one another?"*
- How about *"forgiving as the Lord has forgiven you?"*
- And how about *"loving others, which binds all things together in perfect harmony?"*

When it comes down to it, the final test for our families will be whether those in our families know they are loved.

It's no secret that the most pressing need in family today is love, regardless of whether a person is a parent, an adolescent, or a child. In most cases, the issue is not whether we love one another, but whether that love is rightly and effectively communicated. We are called to love no matter what. In a word, we are to have the same love for one another that God has for us.

Rightly Clothed

No one can accuse me of being a *"fashionista."* I will never be indicted for being a *"clothes horse."*

I have found that a simplified wardrobe takes the guesswork out of getting ready in the morning. My socks are all the same. I have just a few shirts that I put in rotation. The same is true for the sweaters I wear. I have a couple of pairs of khaki pants and a couple of pairs of blue jeans. The shorts I wear are getting frayed, but they are oh so comfortable. All this drives Cheryl simply nuts, particularly the shorts.

You have heard it said that *"clothes make the person."* That's certainly true if what's put on includes *"compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love."*

These are the things we intentionally and regularly need to put on, and by doing so, our relationships will be stronger, our families will be healthier, and our God will be glorified.

Let's resolve then, with God's help, to be rightly clothed.