

Clothed With Compassion

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[0 : 00] Well, church family, it's an absolute delight for me to be with you again from last year. This was such a highlight for me last year and even more to have Joan Lee with me. And I wish our kids could come.

And I cannot skip over the fact that it is a sheer privilege for us to associate with your pastor and Jesse and Haley and their family. I know you all know this.

You don't need to hear it from me, but you are so blessed with this family. And their hearts poured out for you, leading you and loving you as a church through thick and thin.

And it's felt thin the past couple of years. It's felt thin to us too. I won't get into all of that, but I just cannot commend them enough to you. The word says to honor.

Honor those who serve as your leaders. And I want to encourage you to do that with them. I don't think that's corrective because what I've seen and what I know of you as a church is that you do do that.

[0 : 59] It's an encouragement to keep doing that and lean in. Amen. I also bring warm, warm affection from our church. Monument is part of Advance. And we have been, I think, a little over three years, maybe.

And, you know, half of that now has been in pandemic mode. And, you know, so we're all trying to, you know, manage through that too. But I do want to just, you know, it's hard to just convey our hearts as a church for you all as a church down here.

And we get to experience a little bit of that, you know, when we come to join these conferences. We had the Advance Eastern Hub. Phil and Alan mentioned that. And Freddie before the service and prayer.

It's just fantastic. Such a good time. So I hope that you guys hear that and know that there is so much more that the Lord is doing beyond the four walls. And beyond even this site.

And beyond one harbor. So please hear that and know that. If you have your Bible, either the physical version or your phone, I will also tolerate phone utilization. I actually live on, during the messages when I do it, when I listen to a message, my phone's in my hand the entire time.

[2 : 04] Because I'm pretty much on the phone Bible app. But we're going to do Colossians 3. If you don't, that's totally okay. Because I think Asher set me up with the passage.

And it will be on the screen. You're the man, Asher. Colossians 3. Verses 12-14. I almost forgot to set my... Alright.

Put on, then, as God's chosen ones. Holy and beloved. Compassionate hearts. Kindness.

Humility. Meekness and patience. Bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another. Forgiving each other. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

And above all these, put on love. Which binds everything together in perfect harmony. What a wonderful passage of scripture.

- [3 : 09] And may the Lord help us to grasp it today. I've titled the message today, Clothed with Compassion. Clothed with Compassion. I don't know if anybody thinks about it.
- I see we're all wearing clothes today. And that's a good thing. Normally, we kind of don't even think about it. But does anybody remember? Remember? Now I set you up.
- So now everyone's going to remember. What was the first clothing? Big leaves. Big leaves. That's right. You guys know your Bibles. You know the Bible stories. The fall.
- And the sin. Adam and Eve. And they ate the fruit. And even the kids know that. They ate the fruit and they felt ashamed. They felt their guilt. And they went and covered themselves. I don't know about you guys, but I started raking at home.
- Those leaves don't last. It doesn't work. It doesn't work at all. And it's interesting that ever since that first sin and failure, we have, as a humankind, men and women, we have moved away from the Lord, don't we?
- [4 : 17] We move away and we become very self-oriented. In fact, I'm diving into this passage in Colossians and don't have time to give you the full context. But the whole book, the whole letter to that church is talking about the Christians trying to do their own thing.
- They're moving away in some senses. They were tempted to move away and make themselves right, improve themselves on their own. So that's the really, really abbreviated context of the book of Colossians.
- But it goes all the way back to the beginning, doesn't it? In contrast, we move away from God doing what's right in our own eyes, but he moves towards us.
- So Adam and Eve didn't wear those fig leaves very long. Do you remember the story? The Lord God walking in the garden, coming to them, looking for them, calling to them, summoning them.
- And yeah, there's judgment. We tend to think, oh, the fall, yeah, boy, they did wrong. And boy, they got judged and kicked out of the garden. Yes, God is a God of justice, and that's a hard thing.
- [5 : 24] But he came to them. He moved to them. And then, guys, he clothed them. Scripture is almost easy to miss.
- The scripture just says he provided them animal skins and clothed them. Well, somebody had to die. And it prefigures the sacrifice that would come, doesn't it?
- It prefigures the sacrifice of Jesus coming. In fact, that is exactly the story of scripture. It's God moving toward us, and he moves towards us in compassion.
- Profoundly others-oriented. A cumulative testimony of scripture, and in particular of the four gospels, is that when Jesus Christ sees the fallenness of the world, from the very beginning to this very moment, and to you and in your heart right now, when Jesus sees that fallenness, his deepest impulse, his most natural instinct, is to move toward that sin and suffering, not away from it.
- That's a quote from Dane Ortlund in his book, Gentle and Lowly, and I highly commend that to you. Jesus ultimately clothed himself with compassion by becoming a man for us.
- [6 : 46] Thomas Goodwin, one of the old Puritans, said, Christ is love covered in flesh. I love that. Just what a good summary. So with that as context, I'd like us to look at this verse, and Ashley, you can leave the verse just up on the screen the whole time.
- I'd like us to look at this verse bit by bit, and see what it says to us, and see what we can take away from it this morning. So Colossians 3, first off it says, put on then. Well, there's the clothing analogy, right?

Put on then. And in fact, Colossians 3, if you look at the letter, it's full of these thens and therefore. Since then, therefore. Well, that's, guys, whenever you're reading your scripture, and you see words like that, it's linking whatever it's about to tell you with something that's been said before.

It's just helpful to recognize that. And this is especially important here in this verse, because it's easy to look at these verses and come away with, well, I need to do this. I need to do X, Y, and Z.

Boy, do we not want to miss that what we ultimately are asked to do here, which is a command, is empowered by who we are in Christ.

[7 : 56] And in fact, earlier in Colossians, it says exactly that in chapter 2, verses 6 and 7. It says, if then, there it is again, if then, you have been raised with Christ, you have been made alive in Him, you are entirely different, a new person, a new creation.

If then, and so then again here, put on then, compassionate hearts. So we are called, there is a command. I don't apologize for the commands of Scripture, and we shouldn't be squeamish about them.

There are lots of others in chapter 3. We don't have time to get into them. Those verses right before this are very, very sharp. Stop sinning. Stop being sexually immoral. Be patient with people, and relate with kindness.

It is direct. But in order to grasp that, and not just feel it like it's a wagging finger of moralism, and just do this, we need to recognize that we clothe ourselves with compassion, because He has clothed us with compassion.

Does that resonate with you all? Do you feel that? It's so important we get that truth from Scripture. Because otherwise, we'll come in here, and I don't want you guys leaving this room.

[9 : 06] I need to be more loving. No. I almost want to say no, if you don't get the first part, that you are more loved than you can possibly imagine. That's what we need God's help to grasp.

See, we come in looking for, what do I need to do? Lord, what is it that I got to do? And it's the equivalent of the fig leaves. Isn't it? It's the equivalent of, I'm going to make my way.

I'm going to make my way, and then Lord, when I feel like I'm good enough, and Lord, if I'm not, like Phil was saying, if I'm not, I'm just going to, no. We have to lean into that. We have to believe. We have to trust Him, and we need His help in that.

So, golly, that's only the first word. Put on then, right? As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, rooted and empowered by who we are in Christ, we work out the Christian walk.

We work out this faith in this life. This is what it looks like. Verses immediately preceding this, it says, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed.

[10 : 10] In the knowledge, after the image of His creator, there's this renewal. And it's interesting that in this passage, it makes reference to the creation, the image of His creator, the fact that we're image bearers.

So, when I'm going back and referencing Genesis 1, it's because it's in the passage. It's pointing us back there. Think about that. From the beginning, how God sees us, He's made us new creations.

He has recreated us. Where there was failure originally, He has recreated us. So, in light of that, we are being renewed in that knowledge day in, day out. So, guys, I want to tell you, it is who we are that drives what we do as believers.

Let that stick. Let that resonate. It's who we are that drives what we do. Because we are clothed with compassion, we are thus called to clothe ourselves with compassion.

It's like, hang on. You just said we're clothed with compassion. What do I got to do? Well, apparently, the scripture says, put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts.

[11 : 19] Be who you are. That's what it says. It doesn't say, be who you aren't. If you aren't, if you haven't been clothed with compassion, guys, if you haven't put your faith in the Lord Jesus, you might be really, really good at pretending at this, but I guarantee you, in the end, it's fig leaves.

We don't want to be there. And that's not what the Lord's heart is for us. It's who we are that drives what we do. Because we're clothed with compassion, we are then called to then make it so.

Reflect that. So, compassionate hearts is the next phrase. This is profoundly others-oriented. We kind of know what compassion means. I think we have a good sense of when we hear the word compassion, what does that mean?

And again, I'll go back to the book Gentle and Lowly, Dane Ortlund. He really captures a sweeping scope in a really brief summary of Jesus' compassion.

Traveling from town to town, Jesus saw the crowds and he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless. That's in Matthew 9. This compassion comes in waves over and over again in Christ's ministry.

[12 : 31] And it drives them to do these things. Heal the sick. He had compassion on them and healed their sick. Matthew 14. Feed the hungry. I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. Matthew 15.

Teach the crowds. And he had compassion on them and he began to teach them many things. Mark 6. And wipe away the tears of the bereaved. And he had compassion on her and said to her, Do not weep.

Luke 7. In each of these cases, the Greek word for compassion is the same and refers most literally to the bowels or the guts of a person.

It's an ancient way of referring to what rises up from one's most innermost core. The compassion reflects the deepest heart of Christ.

This is what I want us to think of when we hear and we read this word compassionate hearts. Again, before we go to what do I need to do to be compassionate? Recognize Jesus' compassion for us.

[13 : 36] Moving towards us. Then it says bearing with one another. Forgiving one another. And I'm going to hop through some of these. Whole messages could be given on each of these phrases by the way, which would be wonderful and very productive.

But I'm not going to do that to you guys today so that would be good. Bearing with one another and forgiving one another. This is profoundly costly. To bear with someone and to forgive someone costs the person who is bearing with and forgiving if you think about it you have to take on you choose to bear with someone you are taking on their burden in some way even if it's just in the moment of the interaction and the dialogue.

Even if it's that time when they're on the phone and they're just bawling their eyes out pouring their hearts out and you're feeling the weight of that. That's bearing with and there's a cost.

There's a cost to it. forgiving even more poignant. You're saying I am setting aside my right to get what I am due and I'm going to instead forgive you.

I will take the loss. I'm going to bear the loss and I forgive you. Boy, that's what Jesus did for us. So again, we hear these words bear with one another, forgive one another.

[15 : 07] Boy, that's not go and do in your own power pull on your own bootstraps strap on your fig leaves and go do it. No. It is He bears with us. He forgives us and I love how it says this.

As the Lord has forgiven you so you must also forgive. We hear the echoes from the Lord's prayer. Forgive one another and forgive our trespasses even as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.

There's an echoing theme here. We reflect the Lord in these things and that's how we do it. I know it's not easy to forgive guys. I know it's not easy to bear with and we need to recognize that's Christ's heart to us.

I know you guys are going through the book of Ruth and studying that here. I can't help but make a reference to the fact that this profound costliness of bearing with one another is so well exemplified by the example of Ruth literally giving her life for Naomi and that is a prefiguring of the work of Christ.

I know you guys have hit that and will hit that continually but it prefigures it profoundly. She gives her life for that old woman with nothing and goes to a new land.

[16:19] That is bearing with in the highest order. So much more could be said about these things but I just want us to really take away the depth of the cost of this how central it is to loving and being who we are in Christ.

Again, it's because he does these things for us. It's that that is it who we are that drives what we do. Amen? So, let's look ahead.

Above all these it says put on love. Above all these things put on love. I actually really really love this because I don't know about you guys who does Cliff Notes?

You guys and the kids have to do a book report instead of reading the book you read the clip notes. Oh, so homeschool moms just said stop, pull back. I like I like summaries.

I like summaries. Like, oh, I can remember that. I can keep that. Well, this scripture is actually following a whole series of commands in chapter 3 and it's summarizing it for us wonderfully and it says above all these put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity.

[17:28] Boy, this just echoes so many places in scripture but a couple that I'll just touch on. Jesus was asked what are the two greatest commandments? What did he say? Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

Can you hear that echoed through here? Above all these put on love. And then we think of the course of 1 Corinthians 13 the love chapter. Let's not just refer to that when we go to weddings.

Right? That chapter spells out what you want to know what love looks like? Don't have time to preach that one either but go read that chapter.

It's not envious and it's not rude. It's not boastful. It's not proud. Oh, that's what it looks like to bear with one another. It's patient and it's kind. It echoes the words directly in this passage.

Compassion, hearts, kindness, patience, meekness. How much, guys, how much do we need this in our world today?

[18:33] I don't know about you all but the pandemic has shredded family relationships and friendships in so many places. We have felt that acutely as a church.

It isn't just that we haven't been able to meet. It's people not seeing eye to eye and being angry with each other and frustrated with each other over masks or no masks or vaccine or no vaccine.

And as if that wasn't enough, we had our political strife and we had the racial tension that took off in a big way last summer. That wasn't new but it got pronounced.

there's just non-stop reasons surrounding us for exactly these words. Isn't it? That we need these.

The world needs now love. Sweet love. But it's not the sappy love. It's not. It isn't. Like we have to say no as the people of God.

[19 : 37] We are not saying come in here and do a nice service with us and be we are saying come in here we're going to bear with one another. We're going to pay the price to love one another.

We're going to love you too and it's going to hurt especially when you walk out those doors and leave. And maybe we don't see you again. That's love guys.

That's leaning in and boy do we need this. I know the Lord has that for us. He wants to encourage us in that. This love has to supersede above all else put it on.

When your family when your own family when your own blood is demeaning you ignoring you he bore with us.

He forgave us. Lord help us to do the same. Lord help us to do the same. And we're going to stick out guys. We're going to stick out. We do already.

[20 : 39] I trust the Lord is already making you guys a light on a hill to this community in eastern North Carolina. A lamp of light and hope and brightness that's not it isn't superficial it's real.

It's deep. At the beginning God provided clothes for our fallen parents. They were undeserving.

and he still does. He still does. But we must put them on church family and that's what this passage is telling us.

We must put them on. He moves towards us in our uncleanness but for us it is to receive that and to believe it.

It's the work of faith. See faith isn't just like mentally sensing yeah I believe in Jesus. It's buying in guys. It's buying in completely the way that he ultimately took on the complete he took on flesh.

[21 : 45] He became a man. God became a man. Philippians 2 he set aside all his rights and became a man and went to the cross naked in our place bearing our sin bearing our shame that is our hope and that is our power.

So when we hear words like this guys again please don't hear the moralistic wagging finger of come be a better person or even come be a better Christian. I don't want you to hear that first and foremost.

You have to see these commands first and foremost through the one who made it all possible because he moved towards us. That's the way we need to come at it. So I have two more stories and I'm close to closing and they're both from scripture and they're both related to clothing.

There is so much the more I dug on and prepared for this there is so much to say about clothes in scripture. It's fascinating. So the one that stuck out to me was the story in Matthew 22 and I won't get into the whole but I'll just summarize it and it essentially is about the ill-clad wedding guest.

So Jesus told the parable and the way the parable went basically nobody was coming to this wedding that this king had prepared and so he sends out his servants and call everybody in.

[23 : 09] It doesn't matter. They all come in. But when the king came in to look at the guests he saw there was a man who had no wedding garments and he said to him friend how did you get in here without a wedding garment?

And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants bind him hand and foot and cast him out into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth for many are called but few are chosen.

Ow. Isn't that I thought Jesus taught like were we talking about compassionate hearts and what's going on here? I think the beauty of this passage in particular and there's applications for both believers and unbelievers but I want to speak to you if you've not yet put your faith in Christ.

The call is open to you if you have not yet put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins he calls you openly and freely but guys if you come in and pretend if you come in and it isn't a full on all out whole hearted this is my life cost me my life the cost of discipleship guys there's no price to pay in terms of you do these things and then you achieve that's not what I'm saying and that's not what the scripture is saying but it does cost everything it's absolute submitted I love how Alan said it the king Jesus is my king I gave him he gave his life to him that's what we're called to do here and it's not for us to pretend there is an echo here however faint of the fig leaves unprepared responding to the call but didn't accept the clothing that was provided I actually read a little bit of the background in these times when higher ups like kings or the well to do would give a party they'd provide robes for the guests why weren't you wearing the robe

I provided is in essence what was being communicated fascinating so for unbelievers in particular I want to urge you don't rely on your own fig leaves come to him and I'm telling you we are telling you collectively it's enough it's enough his provision for us is enough and then the other story I want to hit on oh and I can't help but say this one it says many are called if you were chosen well in our passage today it speaks to the chosen doesn't it it says God's chosen ones holy and beloved hallelujah hallelujah guys that is not credit to us it's because he chose us thank you Lord and then the last story is the leper in Leviticus chapter 13 it describes at great length how lepers had to clothe themselves and how they had to live in the ancient times in Israel quote the leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out unclean unclean and he shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease he is unclean he shall live alone his dwelling shall be outside the camp we have a hard time in our modern age relating to leprosy a horrific disease and I won't get into the details of it but the net effect of this which you can't get through reading a passage like that is stay away from me because I am filthy and contagious that was why they were literally they had to make themselves look the way they felt imagine if we had to dress the way we felt and they had to say in case people couldn't see or weren't aware hand over their face unclean it's the equivalent of ancient masking unclean

[27 : 35] I'm filthy stay away so in light of that come to the gospels and this story is in all three gospels in Mark chapter 1 and a leper came to him speaking of Jesus imploring him kneeling to him and said if you will you can make me clean and what does it say moved with pity compassionate heart Jesus stretched out his hands and touched him and said to him I will be clean and immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean despite that leper's filth Jesus moved toward him in compassion and touched him in his uncleanness guys he is doing that among us today he moves towards us in our filth he moved towards us in our guilt and in our shame and he reaches out and he touches you and says

I will be clean that's what we're talking about here that's the compassionate heart of the Lord Jesus for you personally I will be clean and immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean how like that leper are we Isaiah 64 says we have all become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags we look over the context of Colossians 3 in the earlier verses we're guilty of every single one of those sins that it's in there there's not a one of us that have in some way seriously offended and that's just a short list right and yet Jesus leans forward and he says though we are guilty of all of that and so much more he touches us and restores us he clothed himself guys in our flesh he set aside his own glory and his rights he went to the cross he exchanges our filthy rags of our own works our pathetic fig leaves and our tendency to shy away and he says no and he comes to us and he robes us in righteousness

Isaiah 61 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord my soul shall exult in my God for he has clothed me with garments of salvation he has covered me with the robe of righteousness this is the compassionate heart of our Savior for us today this is our hope so do you see church family do you see brothers and sisters how that is what we need to take away from this scripture so that then we can go and put that on you are so profoundly loved you each and everyone are recipients of the compassionate heart of the Lord Jesus Christ he is not far from you he may feel far from you but he is near he has done all this for us and it is continuing work it's a continuing work of redemption he is continuing to restore this clothing of love guys is so essential for us in our own walks of life but the context of this passage remember it was a letter to the church and the context of the commands is to do it together bearing with one another loving one another there is a one another-ness about this a togetherness that is actually essential it is critical for us to display the good news of the gospel to tell other people about Jesus

John 13 35 says they will know you are my disciples because of what your love for one another so there is a one another the one another-ness is not oh that's just nice to be you kind of it will help you to be in these settings oh yeah it will but it's essential to our witness so church family we clothe ourselves with compassion and Phil you can come up and the band we clothe ourselves with compassion for one another because Jesus did it for us so I can't think about what an amazing Sunday we've got baptism we've gotten to worship now we're going to take time to share the Lord's supper together and I can't think of a better way for us to respond to what the Lord is doing I trust everyone has one of these at your seat if you don't I think you can raise your hand and Lisa or some of the others can help you oh church family Paul prays in Ephesians chapter 3 and he says

I pray that you would be given the strength to grasp I don't have it memorized but the depth and the length and the height and the breadth and to know the love of Christ we need his help the things we've talked about just this morning we've barely scratched the surface and even for those of you like me who may have been believers for decades guys I can't tell you how profoundly affected I've been just studying these passages and then this past weekend and I was barely keeping it together before coming up here but the emotion doesn't give I'm not taking any confidence in that I'm emotional do you understand my confidence is that Jesus is opening my heart to see that and I believe he's going to do the same for each of you and I loved how Phil said it earlier regardless of how you feel some of us are most sensitive right now to the loss the sheer magnitude of loss whatever that might be consistent sickness family challenges friendships that have hard ways or they're broken right now struggling with your work struggling over sin whatever that is we bring that to the Lord the same way that that leper came

[34 : 07] Lord if you will you can make me whole if you will you can make me clean I don't want to keep walking around with my hair torn raggedy clothes and unclean I want to come to you and be refreshed when Jesus was about to go to the cross he took time with his dearest disciples who would all leave him in a matter of hours and he reminded them he said take this bread this is my body broken for you please do this in remembrance of me let's take the bread and then he took the cup the wine they had we have a little juice he said take this and drink it's the blood of the new covenant this is my blood poured out for you guys when we do this when we do the baptism it's symbolic

Alan said it these are sacred sacraments moments for us to remember what Jesus did for us he shed his blood for us because he took on flesh he had blood to shed because he took it on for us he set aside his rights for us so he could bear our sins so let's take and drink and remember the blood that cleanses us so let's what