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Pentecost 11 –August 21, 2022

“Wearing the King’s Clothes”

Read: Colossians 3: 1 - 11/ Memorize:

In just a few weeks, kids will be returning to school. The mad dash of getting ready is on: that might mean new clothes or new-to-you clothes. There’s nothing like showing up with something new-to-you. It makes us feel better. Social scientists tell us it makes us more confident and energetic. As the saying “clothes make the man or woman” is, in essence, true.

In our text for today, Paul encourages the Colossians to put on their new wardrobe. Since they now belong to Jesus they ought to look the part. He wants their lives to reflect the glory of God and their new estate. In putting on Jesus, it will allow them to fully reflect the love of God.

This new life is in opposition to the pagan religions that surrounded them that taught little or nothing about personal morality. A worshiper could bow before an idol, put his offering on the altar; and then go back to the same old life of sin. What a person believed had no direct relationship to how they behaved.

Many who heard the Gospel responded to it, kind of. Luke tells us of one man who said, “I will follow you wherever you go.” He was easily put off when Jesus said He had no place to lay his head. Another offered “right after I bury my father.” Jesus sees right through him. A third said “let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus sends him away. Many people still think it more important to take care of their own concerns first.

Paul says that to love Jesus is to be a new creation, joined to His crucifixion and resurrection. Therefore, we receive a new look. It should have both an inward and outward presentation in both attitude and actions. Attitude should be a whole lot different, one of humility rather than pride.

The thought is we become that which we worship. That's why Paul was encouraging the Colossians, to "set your hearts on things above." Paul says to keep our eyes on Jesus so that we can be dressed like Him, in the grace, mercy and glory of God.

We are sinners, forgiven but still prone towards sin. One step in putting on Christ is to get rid of our old ways. Many people feel that there is nothing as comfortable as an old pair of shoes. Yet, some have a hard time getting rid of such things.

Paul calls out some really bad habits that he urges us to abandon. Things like sexual immorality, lust, greed, along with anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander and filthy language. The dilemma is, they are like that old comfortable pair of shoes that we like to hang on to. Some of them have long strongholds in our lives. We excuse them by telling people, that's just the way we are, in essence, saying that they need to accept them. Paul reminds us that God will not let us get away with that.

You see, we can make all kinds of excuses for what we do. We lie to each other and pretend that God doesn't care. Paul says otherwise. God cares when we are untruthful. Interestingly enough, when we're with other people, we are more likely to be untruthful, even to ourselves.

A man and some friends went to an amusement park on a hot summer day. They decided to go on a white water rafting ride, so they could cool off. They got soaked. As they got off the ride, they looked at each, and began debating whether or not to go back to the car and get a change of clothes. No one wanted to admit just how uncomfortable they were.

For the next two hours, they felt gross. However, whenever one of them would ask another if they wanted to go back to the car, the reply was always the same, "I'm ok. Did you want to go back to the car?" "Oh no, I'm ok." And it went on like that for the rest of the day.

As they were driving home, one man said, "I can't wait to get home and get changed. I have been miserable all day." His honesty led them all to confess they felt the same way. What we wear can make us miserable. So can our sins.

Annie Dillard, in her book "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek" writes: "At the end of the island I noticed a small green frog. He was exactly half in and half out of the water. He was a very small frog with wide, dull eyes. Just as I looked at him, he slowly crumpled and began to sag. The spirit vanished from his eyes as if snuffed out. His skin emptied and

drooped. An oval shadow hung in the water behind the drained frog; then the shadow glided away. The frog then started to sink.

I had read about water bugs, but never seen one. “Giant water bug” is really the name of a creature which is an enormous, heavy-bodied, brown beetle. It eats insects, tadpoles, fish and frogs. It captures them by grasping them by its forelegs and hooking them inward into the victim.

It hugs them tight and paralyzes them with venomous digestive saliva injected during a vicious bite. Injected through the puncture holes, it dissolves the victim’s muscles, bones and organs, all but the skin. Then the giant bug sucks the liquid out of the victim’s body.”

Sin does the exact same thing. It sucks the life out of you, but then injects guilt, shame and doubt into you. Your walk will be filled with disappointment and discouragement. You cannot walk with Jesus, while doing things contrary to His teachings.

That is why you want to confront those things that Paul exhorts you to put off. It starts with the recognition of our need for God. Our friends in the Twelve Step movement give us a fine example of that. The first step is to admit that you have a problem, which you do not have any control over and that you need a higher power to help you conquer it. Recovery cannot take place until you are honest with yourself and your failings.

So in Christ, we confront our sins because we confess them to God and receive His forgiveness. In the waters of baptism we get that new wardrobe that God provided through His Son, Jesus. In the bread and wine of communion, His Body and Blood, we receive the sustenance for faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit enables us to live the life we have been called to in Jesus, bringing the transformation God desires for us.

Don Calhoun’s life changed on a March night in 1993. This \$5 per hour clerk loved to go to professional basketball games, but they were so expensive he had only attended two Chicago Bulls games in his life. This was his third. A woman, who worked for the Bulls organization, walked up to him and told him that they were selecting him to take part in a promotional event.

At a break, Calhoun would be brought out onto the court and given a basketball to shoot from behind the free throw line at the opposite end of the court, about 79 feet

from the basket. If he could make it, he would win a million dollars. He had played basketball in Bloomington, but had never tried a shot like this. He took the basketball in his hands, looked over at Michael Jordan who played for the Bulls. He could see they were pulling for him.

Here's the video to see how he did: (explain to A/V that you want them to stop it after he gets congratulated by the team. That's about halfway.)

When Don Calhoun went home that night, he had only \$2 in his wallet, but he would receive \$50,000 a year for the next 20 years of his life. His life had been changed in an instant. Can you imagine that kind of life-changing experience? But why was he chosen? Watch the other half of the video and pay attention to his shoes. Here's why he was chosen: He was wearing a gold colored pair of suede boots and the young lady was attracted to them.

We are chosen for our life-changing experience because of God's grace and mercy. It has nothing to do with what we wear or have. We may appear to look the same outwardly, but we are a new creation because we are living with a promise. Paul says we are heirs and co-heirs with Jesus, who can put on the wardrobe that befits a king.

Here's your question: Because you have put on Jesus, how will you reveal your "new wardrobe" by your attitudes and actions?