

**Text: Colossians 3:12-17**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> 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.

**Prayer of the Day:**

Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming deliver us from the corruption of our sin and transform us into the likeness of his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Alleluia. (Colossians 3:15a cf. NIV)

**Sermon Text:**

That's a game changer! When two teams are battling back and forth and one play changes the momentum of a team, it's a game changer. A new piece of equipment that makes a job easier and increases precision and efficiency is a game changer. I have heard that the new vaccines as they roll out are supposed to be game changers as we battle the virus. But nothing this world produces will ever compare with the game changer God introduced on that first Christmas in Bethlehem. Today in the words of Colossians 3:12-17, the Apostle Paul points how just how much of a game changer the birth of Jesus and His subsequent work will really be. **THIS CHILD CHANGES EVERYTHING! WE ARE NOW GOD'S PEOPLE, STRIVING TO LIVE FOR HIM, AND THANKFUL FOR ALL HE HAS DONE.**

First things first in our lesson today, notice how God talks about us. *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved.* Simply put, God should never see us this way. We like to live under the delusion that we are special, individually worthy of great lives in this world and the honor and praise of all we come into contact with. Secretly in our hearts, or maybe even not so secretly these days, we have it right and everyone else has it wrong.

Unfortunately, the world does not revolve around us the way we wish it might. Another truth exists as God peers down at the natural state of humanity. David reveals it in Psalm 14 (2-3), *The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.* Just in case we think this is Old Testament talk and not a truth for mankind today, Paul confirms it as he writes to the Romans, *Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

But then in pure and unfathomable grace, God gives us a game changer. As we heard repeatedly Christmas Eve and Day, Jesus was born to save us from our sins and he consequences of them. He was born to face the wrath of God and pay for every one of our sins. He was born to defeat death and devil and open the gates to heaven. He was born to make us *God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved.* In his perfect life, innocent death and triumphant resurrection, He provides all we need to change everything for us. By grace and through faith when god now peers down at you, He sees one covered in the work of Christ, one presented with the gift of faith, one who can be loved because of the righteousness Jesus has given to us. We are no longer wretched and reviled because of our sin, we are citizens of heaven, a people God has chosen for Himself.

Of course, these are not simply empty words. Paul goes one in the majority of our lesson to talk about the effect this message will have in the hearts and minds of God's people. <sup>12</sup> *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* <sup>13</sup> *Bear*

*with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Perhaps we'll use some snippets from the People's Bible Commentary on Colossians (p176-178), authored by Harlyn Kuschel, a son of our congregation here at St. Paul's.

- *Compassion* ... is a deep feeling of affection rooted in the love of Christ which fills believers' hearts. Believers extend compassion especially to those who are suffering or in distress.
- *Kindness* is somewhat broader than compassion. The very opposite of malice, it is a cordial, loving disposition which knows no harshness.
- *Humility* (is) the virtue that leads Christians to strive to place themselves below others and to put the welfare of others before their own.
- *Lowliness and humility* were attitudes thoroughly despised by the pagan world. ... But lowliness and self-sacrificing humility were characteristics of Jesus, and he wants those who he has called into his family of believers to imitate his humility. ... What a happy, peaceful atmosphere exists in a Christian congregation where each member counts the other as better than himself and rejoices to serve others.
- Christian *Gentleness* is not a spinelessness that bows before every breeze or refuses to take a stand on any principle. ... At the same time, that Christian will exhibit gentleness in his dealings with others, including his enemies. ... A gentle Christian would rather suffer injury than inflict it.
- *Patience* is a "holding out" despite provocation and injustice. ... Gentleness and patience are rare characteristics among human beings, but they ought to be distinguishing marks of the chosen, holy and beloved children of God.
- Blemishes and faults will show. ... But day after day believers will work to understand. They will *bear with each other* and help each other ... they will cheerfully *forgive each other*, just as Christ forgave them.

Dear friends, obviously we are not perfect at these, a quick look at our lives under the strains of our world bear that out pretty quickly, but I would not be so quick to dismiss this list. In so many ways, I see these characteristics alive and well here at St. Paul's. In the concern we show for one another in hardships and sorrows. In the hands we extend to assist each other in our trials and tribulations. In the sacrifice of the parent who seeks to provide for their child not only the physical necessities of life but the spiritual instruction to provide for them eternally.

Yes, as we deal with one another, sinners that we are, gentleness, patience, forgiveness will always be needed and at times, we will all fail. Thankfully, our strength is not found in ourselves, nor do we do any of this to earn our place or status with our God. Listen again to the words of our lesson, <sup>14</sup>*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.* <sup>15</sup>*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.* <sup>16</sup>*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.* <sup>17</sup>*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.*

Our love is built upon the love which Christ has shown to us which binds all of these virtues together. We are overflowing with love because we know the Savior's peace, which rules our hearts and minds in the knowledge of the Word, which constantly teaches and strengthens us even as it points out the areas that we as Christian people can grow, will grow in gratitude for all our Savior has done for us.

As the sermon draws to a close note however the foundation of Christian faith once more. Christ's name, His Word, His peace. Christ and His holy Word will be the focal point of the life of any congregation and any Christian. Here we find our strength. Here we see God's love. Here we find more than just a reason for a season but a reason to rejoice in every aspect of our lives and into all eternity.

I told you, Jesus is a game changer. **THIS CHILD CHANGES EVERYTHING! WE ARE NOW GOD'S PEOPLE, STRIVING TO LIVE FOR HIM, AND THANKFUL FOR ALL HE HAS DONE.** perhaps the best way to conclude is simply by reading that last paragraph once more. <sup>15</sup>*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.* <sup>16</sup>*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.* <sup>17</sup>*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. Amen!*