

ONE HEART, ONE MIND: Pursuing Accord in a Season of Discord Series

A Closet Makeover (Colossians 3:12-17)

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WATCH/LISTEN: fbcjc.org/sermon/a-closet-makeover

Colossians 3:12-17 (MSG)

“So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It’s your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.”

One of the trending shows on Netflix these days is *Get Organized with the Home Edit*. Expert home organizers Clea and Joanna help celebrities and everyday clients edit, categorize, and contain their clutter to create stunning spaces. There is something therapeutic for many of us about seeing everything in its proper place. The world may be in absolute chaos and feel like it is burning down around us but at least our sock drawer is in order.

But getting organized isn’t easy. If it were, there wouldn’t be lots of shows about how to do it where people pay good money to get someone to come help them hang up shirts.

Can you guess the most challenging task for clients in the entire process of getting organized? If you said “purging” or editing as Clea and Joanna call it, you’re a winner. Accepting you have too much and deciding what to let go of is the hardest part of the process. There are piles of clothes never worn, some still with tags or clothes not worn in years because they no longer fit or are in style, and if we are honest, they will never come back into style because they were never in style to begin with. And then there are the pantries with food expiration dates from the Reagan administration. It is hard to let go – even the stuff that has no value and actually looks quite ugly on us.

Many of us need a closet makeover. Yes, maybe in a literal sense. But don’t call me. Call Clea and Joanna from Home Edit. But we are also in need of a closet makeover, in a spiritual sense. It is time for us to do some editing, some purging, and today we get some fashion advice from an unlikely source – a first century traveling preacher named Paul. While in prison, Paul writes a

letter to new believers in a small town of Colossae. We read part of that letter as our text today. These believers were dealing with some cultural pressures, pressures we don't really know many details about, but these pressures were leading some to turn from the Way of Jesus, and Paul was writing to encourage them to remember whose they were and who they were called to be.

Prior to the portion we read today in our text, Paul reminds readers if we are serious about living a new life in Christ, then we must act like it. We must set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth and put to death whatever in us that is earthly ... things like, as he mentions in Chapter 3:8, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from our mouths. Paul is calling us to go through our character closet, edit or purge and get rid of the stuff that is out of season for a follower of Jesus; things that no longer fit, things that are ugly; and to replace them with a better wardrobe. And why?

Because we are God's chosen ones, chosen for this new life of love. Because our old ways died with Christ, and they are to be replaced with an entirely new wardrobe God picked out for us.

If there is anything this political season is showing us, it is this: followers of Christ have some editing to do. Now, before we start critiquing what others are wearing and sounding like third-rate fashion critics, let us do what so many of our mommas told us to do before we leave the house: **look in the mirror**. You see, it is tempting to tell others what we think of the attitudes they are wearing. But the best place to begin is to take a good look in the mirror first to critique our own outfit.

What clothes should Christ-followers be wearing? What practices ought to characterize the community that finds its identity and direction in the story of Jesus? According to our text today, we are called to be, as Christ was, people who embody compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, and thanksgiving.

Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, and thanksgiving. All the words we naturally think of when we think of politics and elections, right? The very words that describe our conversations, our social media posts and engagements, our private thoughts and positions toward those "across the aisle", right? The very words people outside the faith would use to describe people of faith they've encountered throughout this campaign season, yes?

In fact, so much of what we hear praised around us is the exact opposite of God's wardrobe. We are pushed to dress in power, self-protection, self-preservation, and winning. The traits Paul mentions in Colossians are often seen as naïve and unrealistic in today's world. Yet Paul is reminding us that this is the very wardrobe of Christ, and we, as the chosen ones, holy and beloved, are to dress like Christ, not the world.

What would it look like this election season to be people of compassion? What does kindness look like in a conversation with someone who you strongly disagree with over something that matters deeply to you? What does humility look like after November 3 when an election goes

your way but leaves others feeling very afraid and vulnerable? What does gentleness look like when someone attacks us or those we love or support for our opinions or positions? What does patience look like when someone doesn't want or even try to understand why you believe what you do? What does forgiveness look like when things don't go as you hope the next four years?

For sure, this is not the wardrobe of naivety. This is a wardrobe of the prodigals. This is the wardrobe of those who know themselves only as the beloved of Christ and, because of that love, we willingly give Christ rule of our lives and our words and our actions. This is the wardrobe of those who have been ambushed by the compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness of Christ. This is the wardrobe of grace.

Author Sarah Anderson, in her book, "The Space Between us" writes, "Grace is both the best news (in how it benefits us) and the worst news (in how it benefits others.) That to keep company with Jesus inevitably means we would keep company with people we despise as well. Jesus preached a message to the powerful and mighty that those who were seen as "less than" were deemed worthy, and valuable, and deserving of love **while also** preaching a message to the crowds that this very same message of love, acceptance, and grace was for the people doing the oppressing and judging as well."ⁱ

The challenge for us is evident even in that statement. That as we listen to it and bring our own perspectives and experiences, who we identify as the less than and the oppressors differs among us. And we get stuck there, unable to understand, taunted by a world that preys on fear and division, we start pulling out the old clothes Paul lists in 3:8: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language. We start dehumanizing and stop seeing the image of God in others. Positions and opinions matter. But our posture matters more.

Paul says the most important part of the wardrobe, the coat that completes the outfit, the thread that binds it all together is love. "And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it." (Col 3:14)

If there is a common theme among Paul's writings and letters in the Second or New Testament, it is this: **love and unity**. Love one another. Be unified. Not matter your differences, love one another. Extend grace.

One of the things I love about First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, is it is a thinking church. I've told this countless times to people when I talk about our church. We have people in this family who disagree strongly ... on football teams and baseball teams; on music and movie preferences; on social issues and politics. Yet, we are one body in love and in Christ. Is it messy? Yes. Is it hard? Yes. Do we always dress in the clothes of Christ in our conversations with one another? No. But there is a desire to fight for unity in love even when we are not uniform in thought. I don't want to be part of a church that thinks the same. I need to hear different perspectives and experiences. You do, too. I don't want to be part of a church that thinks the same. I want to be part of a church that loves the same; a church that chooses to dress in the wardrobe of Christ.

Sarah also writes in her book, *The Space Between Us*, that “*If our political and religious climate has taught us anything, it’s that we can hold the right positions and still get so very much – maybe even the most crucial things – wrong. We may believe rightly but we behave poorly. We may have the correct doctrine but initiate a shameful discourse. We may be spot on in our politics but communicate using disgraceful tactics. We may, as the apostle Paul so eloquently put it when waxing poetic to the church in Corinth, speak in tongues of angels, give all we have to the poor, understand God’s secret knowledge, and sacrifice our bodies, but if we do not have love, we have gained nothing.*”ⁱⁱ

When people embody those qualities, they make possible a community that lives in harmony. Such communities are ruled by the peace of Christ. Col 3:15 in the NRSV translation reads, “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.” The word translated “rule” has a meaning not of simple power and authority, but more of wise discernment, possessing an unruffled, non-anxious center that pursues good choices for all. A community ruled by the peace of Christ is a community not driven by fear but rather love. Our world, and our own hearts, are in desperate need for community like this.

Season one of the Home Edit on Netflix has eight episodes. All eight episodes feature brand new clients except for one. There is one celebrity client that Clea and Joanna return to because her closet has gotten chaotic again. A year earlier, they had edited and organized, but the client had dropped the system, and it was a mess again. With zero shame, the Home Edit team came back, and made some tweaks to help get her back on track again.

My friends, we’re not going to get this right all the time. We’re going to have repeat closet makeovers. Like some new clothes, the clothes of Christ aren’t the most comfortable or easiest to wear. They can feel a bit awkward, and it is easy to discard them or hide them in the back of the closet and reach for the old clothes we were used to. Especially when the old clothes are what is in style in the world. But that is why, as Paul’s reminds us, we set our minds on things that are above and not things that are on the earth. As those changed by God’s love and grace, we look at the mirror constantly to check our own outfits, and in doing so, we become a mirror for others as well. As those who have been ambushed by the compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness of Christ, let us dress ourselves in his likeness ... and over all of it wear the coat of love to complete the outfit. And the peace of Christ will have the rule of our lives and we will be one heart and one mind in Christ.

BENEDCTION: Colossians 3:17

“Let every detail in your lives – words, actions, whatever – be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.”

ⁱ Sarah Bauer Anderson, *The Space Between Us: How Jesus Teaches Us to Live Together When Politics and Religion Pull Us Apart (First Printing) 2020*, 54.

ⁱⁱ Sarah Bauer Anderson, *The Space Between Us: How Jesus Teaches Us to Live Together When Politics and Religion Pull Us Apart (First Printing) 2020*, 73.