

Christmas 1
December 26, 2021

“Elect of God, put on your new Christmas clothes!”
(Colossians 3:12)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Today’s text for this First Sunday after Christmas is from our Epistle reading,
Colossians 3:12

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;”

Here ends our text.

Are you wearing anything new that you unwrapped yesterday? New clothes? New shoes? Socks? Tie? I got some new slippers, really comfy. I left them at home though. They’re pretty stylish, so you might not have noticed if I wore them this morning. But the thing about these slippers was, that they just came in a shoe box from Amazon without any note telling me who they were from.

Then, yesterday morning as we were unwrapping presents, I received a text from my brother. “Hope they fit. I was your secret Santa.” Our family draws names at Thanksgiving through Elfster, a Secret Santa App. Instead of getting gifts for everyone, each person draws just one adult and one child. It’s a lot of fun, and saves time and money.

I know some of you who come down from the north, like to have your gift exchange early so you can do it in person. That’s always the best if you can coordinate everyone’s schedules and flights are getting cancelled because of Covid.

Well, Paul couldn’t be with the congregation of the Colossians in person to watch them unwrap the greatest of gifts, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He wrote this letter from his first Roman imprisonment. But the letter is filled with spiritual gifts of the

word of truth of the Gospel of salvation. Let's walk quickly through the highlights of the letter of the Colossians to admire the beauty of the Gospel. Paul writes in the opening verses.

“3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;”

Imprisonment isn't stopping God's gift exchange. It's going out to all the world. What's being unwrapped? The hope that is laid up for you in heaven by the grace of God. And its bringing forth the fruit of faith, Paul says. The Colossians are wearing their new spiritual clothes!

Of course, Paul isn't able to see their outfits of love for all the saints, but he's heard about it. He's heard about their faith!

In fact, Paul admits in chapter 2:1 that he hasn't seen some of the members of the church face to face. Paul went through the area of Phrygia on his missionary trips but God worked through Epaphras to begin this congregation as Paul writes in verse 7 and 8 of chapter 1.

7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.”

Epaphras is telling Paul of how their wearing their new spiritual clothing in Christ. And this leads Paul to pray even more for them.

“9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed

us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:9-14)

This is what today is all about – Jesus the Light of the world – the light unto not only the people of Israel but also the Gentiles. This is what Simeon declares to Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus whom he is holding in his arms in our Gospel reading from Luke 2.

**“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation
31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”**

Simeon waited his whole life to see the unwrapped Christmas present of His Savior. The gift of salvation reached Simeon’s arms, eyes, and heart and now he could depart in peace.

My eyes have seen the Light of the world. With Paul, with the Colossians, with each of you this morning we like Simeon have seen the Light of Jesus. For God

“...has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:13-14)

This is the clothing that wraps us all this day after Christmas – the forgiveness of our sins. For Christ wrapped Himself in our flesh and shed His blood to convey us into His kingdom.

Paul continues to let the Colossians admire the beauty of this gift of new life in Christ’s kingdom in chapter two.

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14

having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Eight days after Jesus was born, as is traditionally celebrated on New Year's day, Jesus was circumcised according to the law. But that requirement is no longer necessary to keep because Jesus fulfilled the law. In our baptism, our old clothing of sins is put off, circumcised and our sins are buried. And in baptism we rise to new life!

Jesus has wiped out the requirements that were against us. Gone! He disarmed the powers that were against us. He disarmed the law by keeping it and nailing it to the cross!

Paul is reminding the Colossians and all of us that our Christmas gift of salvation in Christ is pure grace. Don't let anyone tell you that you have earned your Christmas gift by works. For Paul goes on to say in chapter 2,

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21 “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” 22 which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

We can't ever try to clothe ourselves with man-made works. They are but rags of self-imposed religion and false humility.

No, Paul calls the Colossians and each of us who see Jesus with eyes of faith, elect of God, holy, beloved. For God did it all. He planned our salvation, elected us to receive it and gave it to us in time through our baptisms. We're holy by God's grace! We have received God's peace and good will by faith.

Now Paul reminds us in chapter 3 right before our text, that since this is who we are, don't put on the old raggedy sin-stained clothes.

“Now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have

put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,”

No, Paul is saying that we have some beautiful new clothes to wear by the grace of God. Put them on daily.

“put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

Tender mercy, kindness, bearing with one another, forgiving one another...these are the Christmas gifts that you continue to give each other and to your families. For you have been given these gifts not just on Christmas, but every day Christ forgives you.

Oh yes! Christmas continues today and every day as **“the peace of God rule in your hearts... and the word of Christ dwells in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”**

Yes, repeat the sounding joy of Christmas by putting on the clothes of Christmas of Jesus' peace through His mercy and forgiveness, even as Christ as forgiven you.

Elect of God, chosen in the greatest gift exchange ever by His mercy...Now, you know who your secret Santa is. It's no secret. Nor does God ever want it to be.

He has qualified you to be partakers of His inheritance with all the saints, delivered you out of darkness, and conveyed you into His kingdom of the Son of His love through Jesus' forgiveness. Merry Christmas! Blessed Christmas in Jesus! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)